The KING'S TREASURIES
OF LITERATURE

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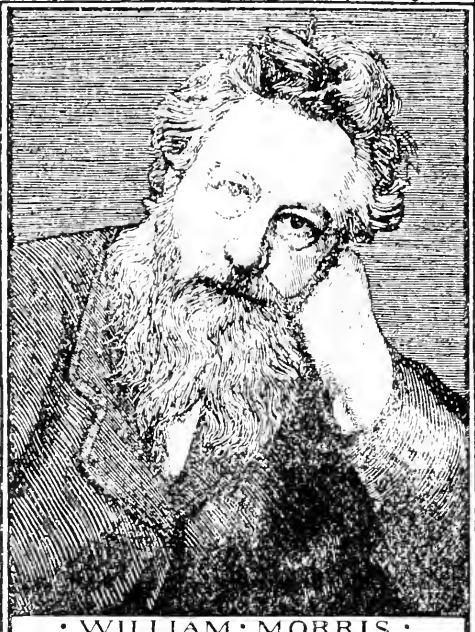

· WILLIAM · MORRIS ·

H·C

NEW YORK E·P·DUTTON AND COMPANY

ATALANTA'S RACE
AND TWO OTHER TALES FROM THE EARTHLY PARADISE

BY WILLIAM MORRIS

M·DENT & SONS·LTD · LONDON & TORONTO

Sole Agent for Scotland
THE GRANT EDUCATIONAL CO. LTD.
GLASGOW

INTRODUCTION

WILLIAM MORRIS wrote the *Earthly Paradise*, which consists of a collection of twenty-five stories in verse. It tells of a roving band of adventurers, "gentlemen and mariners of Norway," who set out to find the Earthly Paradise, and "after many troubles and the lapse of many years came old men to some western land, of which they had never before heard." In this strange land they discover a superior race of men who have many of the characteristics of the best of the Ancient Greeks and who claim, indeed, to be "the seeds of the Ionian race."

The seafarers spend a great deal of their time in telling stories of their own country and listening, in turn, to tales of Greece and the East which are told to them by their hosts. The Prologue to the work tells how the wanderers came, after many adventures and hardships, to the "Western land."

A nameless city in a distant sea,
White as the changing walls of faërie,
Thronged with much people clad in ancient guise
I now am fain to set before your eyes;
There, leave the clear green water and the quays,
And pass betwixt its marble palaces,
Until ye come unto the chiefest square;
A bubbling conduit is set midmost there,
And round about it now the maidens throng,
With jest and laughter, and sweet broken song,

Making but light of labour new begun
While in their vessels gleams the morning sun.
On one side of the square a temple stands,
Wherein the gods worshipped in ancient lands
Still have their altars, a great market-place
Upon two other sides fills all the space,
And thence the busy hum of men comes forth;
But on the cold side looking towards the north
A pillared council-house may you behold,
Within whose porch are images of gold,
Gods of the nations who dwelt anciently
About the borders of the Grecian sea.

Pass now between them, push the brazen door
And standing on the polished marble floor
Leave all the noises of the square behind;
Most calm that reverent chamber shall ye find,
Silent at first, but for the noise you made
When on the brazen door your hand you laid
To shut it after you—but now behold
The city rulers on their thrones of gold,
Clad in most fair attire, and in their hands
Long carven silver-banded ebony wands;
Then from the daïs drop your eyes and see
Soldiers and peasants standing reverently
Before those elders, round a little band
Who bear such arms as guard the English land,
But battered, rent, and rusted sore, and they,
The men themselves, are shrivelled, bent, and grey;
And as they lean with pain upon their spears
Their brows seem furrowed deep with more than years;
For sorrow dulls their heavy sunken eyes.

The Prologue goes on to tell more of the people of the city and their ways, but the poet is careful to tell

us in the Introduction, which precedes the Prologue, that it is no part of his purpose to describe a new ideal state or Utopia. He writes:

> Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time,
> Why should I strive to set the crooked straight?
> Let it suffice me that my murmuring rhyme
> Beats with light wing against the ivory gate,
> Telling a tale not too importunate
> To those who in the sleepy region stay,
> Lulled by the singer of an empty day.

His purpose is to tell stories and the tales are introduced as follows. We quote from the end of the Prologue.

> Behold once more within a quiet land
> The remnant of that once aspiring band,
> With all hopes fallen away, but such as light
> The sons of men to that unfailing night,
> That death they needs must look on face to face.
> Time passed, and ever fell the days apace
> From off the new-strung chaplet of their life;
> Yet though the time with no bright deeds was rife,
> Though no fulfilled desire now made them glad,
> They were not quite unhappy, rest they had,
> And with their hope their fear had passed away;
> New things and strange they saw from day to day
> Honoured they were, and had no lack of things
> For which men crouch before the feet of kings,
> And, stripped of honour, yet may fail to have.
> Therefore their latter journey to the grave
> Was like those days of later autumn-tide,
> When he who in some town may chance to bide
> Opens the window for the balmy air,
> And seeing the golden hazy sky so fair,

And from some city garden hearing still
The wheeling rooks the air with music fill,
Sweet hopeful music, thinketh, Is this spring,
Surely the year can scarce be perishing?
But then he leaves the clamour of the town,
And sees the withered scanty leaves fall down,
The half-ploughed field, the flowerless garden-plot,
The dark full stream by summer long forgot,
The tangled hedges where, relaxed and dead,
The twining plants their withered berries shed,
And feels therewith the treachery of the sun,
And knows the pleasant time is well-nigh done.
In such St. Luke's short summer lived these men,
Nearing the goal of threescore years and ten;
The elders of the town their comrades were,
And they to them were waxen now as dear
As ancient men to ancient men can be;
Grave matters of belief and polity
They spoke of oft, but not alone of these;
For in their times of idleness and ease
They told of poets' vain imaginings,
And memories vague of half-forgotten things,
Not true or false, but sweet to think upon.

For nigh the time when first that land they won,
When new-born March made fresh the hopeful air,
The wanderers sat within a chamber fair,
Guests of that city's rulers, when the day
Far from the sunny noon had fallen away;
The sky grew dark, and on the window-pane
They heard the beating of the sudden rain.
Then, all being satisfied with plenteous feast,
There spoke an ancient man, the land's chief priest,
Who said, " Dear guests, the year begins to-day,
And fain are we, before it pass away,

To hear some tales of that now altered world,
Wherefrom our fathers in old time were hurled
By the hard hands of fate and destiny.
Nor would ye hear perchance unwillingly
How we have dealt with stories of the land
Wherein the tombs of our forefathers stand:
Wherefore henceforth two solemn feasts shall be
In every month, at which some history
Shall crown our joyance; and this day, indeed,
I have a story ready for our need,
If ye will hear it, though perchance it is
That many things therein are writ amiss,
This part forgotten, that part grown too great,
For these things, too, are in the hands of fate."
They cried aloud for joy to hear him speak,
And as again the sinking sun did break
Through the dark clouds and blazed adown the hall,
His clear thin voice upon their ears did fall,
Telling a tale of times long passed away,
When men might cross a kingdom in a day,
And kings remembered they should one day die,
And all folk dwelt in great simplicity.

So the first story, that of *Atalanta's Race*, is told.

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ATALANTA'S RACE
AND TWO OTHER STORIES

ARGUMENT

Atalanta, daughter of King Schœneus, not willing to lose her virgin's estate, made it a law to all suitors that they should run a race with her in the public place, and if they failed to overcome her should die unrevenged; and thus many brave men perished. At last came Milanion, the son of Amphidamas, who, outrunning her with the help of Venus, gained the virgin and wedded her.

THROUGH thick Arcadian woods a hunter went,
Following the beasts up, on a fresh spring day;
But since his horn-tipped bow but seldom bent,
Now at the noontide nought had happed to slay,
Within a vale he called his hounds away,
Hearkening the echoes of his lone voice cling
About the cliffs and through the beech-trees ring.

But when they ended, still awhile he stood,
And but the sweet familiar thrush could hear,
And all the day-long noises of the wood,
And o'er the dry leaves of the vanished year
His hounds' feet pattering as they drew anear,

And heavy breathing from their heads low hung,
To see the mighty cornel bow unstrung.

Then smiling did he turn to leave the place,
But with his first step some new fleeting thought
A shadow cast across his sun-burnt face;
I think the golden net that April brought
From some warm world his wavering soul had caught;
For, sunk in vague sweet longing, did he go
Betwixt the trees with doubtful steps and slow.

Yet howsoever slow he went, at last
The trees grew sparser, and the wood was done;
Whereon one farewell, backward look he cast,
Then, turning round to see what place was won,
With shaded eyes looked underneath the sun,
And o'er green meads and new-turned furrows brown
Beheld the gleaming of King Schœneus' town.

So thitherward he turned, and on each side
The folk were busy on the teeming land,
And man and maid from the brown furrows cried,
Or midst the newly-blossomed vines did stand,
And as the rustic weapon pressed the hand
Thought of the nodding of the well-filled ear,
Or how the knife the heavy bunch should shear.

Merry it was: about him sung the birds,
The spring flowers bloomed along the firm dry road,
The sleek-skinned mothers of the sharp-horned herds

Cornel bow. Made of dogwood, which is very tough and springy.

Now for the barefoot milking-maidens lowed;
While from the freshness of his blue abode,
Glad his death-bearing arrows to forget,
The broad sun blazed, nor scattered plagues as yet.

Through such fair things unto the gates he came,
And found them open, as though peace were there;
Wherethrough, unquestioned of his race or name,
He entered, and along the streets 'gan fare,
Which at the first of folk were well-nigh bare;
But pressing on, and going more hastily,
Men hurrying too he 'gan at last to see.

Following the last of these, he still pressed on,
Until an open space he came unto,
Where wreaths of fame had oft been lost and won,
For feats of strength folk there were wont to do.
And now our hunter looked for something new,
Because the whole wide space was bare, and stilled
The high seats were, with eager people filled.

There with the others to a seat he gat,
Whence he beheld a broidered canopy,
'Neath which in fair array King Schœneus sat
Upon his throne with councillors thereby;
And underneath his well-wrought seat and high,
He saw a golden image of the sun,
A silver image of the Fleet-foot One.

The Fleet-foot One. Diana, goddess of the moon.

A brazen altar stood beneath their feet
Whereon a thin flame flickered in the wind;
Nigh this a herald clad in raiment meet
Made ready even now his horn to wind,
By whom a huge man held a sword, entwined
With yellow flowers; these stood a little space
From off the altar, nigh the starting place.

And there two runners did the sign abide
Foot set to foot,—a young man slim and fair,
Crisp-haired, well knit, with firm limbs often tried
In places where no man his strength may spare;
Dainty his thin coat was, and on his hair
A golden circlet of renown he wore,
And in his hand an olive garland bore.

But on this day with whom shall he contend?
A maid stood by him like Diana clad
When in the woods she lists her bow to bend,
Too fair for one to look on and be glad,
Who scarcely yet has thirty summers had,
If he must still behold her from afar;
Too fair to let the world live free from war.

She seemed all earthly matters to forget;
Of all tormenting lines her face was clear,
Her wide grey eyes upon the goal were set
Calm and unmoved as though no soul were near,
But her foe trembled as a man in fear,

Nor from her loveliness one moment turned
His anxious face with fierce desire that burned.

Now through the hush there broke the trumpet's clang
Just as the setting sun made eventide.
Then from light feet a spurt of dust there sprang,
And swiftly were they running side by side;
But silent did the thronging folk abide
Until the turning-post was reached at last,
And round about it still abreast they passed.

But when the people saw how close they ran,
When halfway to the starting-point they were,
A cry of joy broke forth, whereat the man
Headed the white-foot runner, and drew near
Unto the very end of all his fear;
And scarce his straining feet the ground could feel,
And bliss unhoped for o'er his heart 'gan steal.

But midst the loud victorious shouts he heard
Her footsteps drawing nearer, and the sound
Of fluttering raiment, and thereat afeard
His flushed and eager face he turned around,
And even then he felt her past him bound
Fleet as the wind, but scarcely saw her there
Till on the goal she laid her fingers fair.

There stood she breathing like a little child
Amid some warlike clamour laid asleep,
For no victorious joy her red lips smiled,

Her cheek its wonted freshness did but keep;
No glance lit up her clear grey eyes and deep,
Though some divine thought softened all her face
As once more rang the trumpet through the place.

But her late foe stopped short amidst his course,
One moment gazed upon her piteously,
Then with a groan his lingering feet did force
To leave the spot whence he her eyes could see;
And, changed like one who knows his time must be
But short and bitter, without any word
He knelt before the bearer of the sword;

Then high rose up the gleaming deadly blade,
Bared of its flowers, and through the crowded place
Was silence now, and midst of it the maid
Went by the poor wretch at a gentle pace,
And he to hers upturned his sad white face;
Nor did his eyes behold another sight
Ere on his soul there fell eternal night.

So was the pageant ended, and all folk
Talking of this and that familiar thing
In little groups from that sad concourse broke,
For now the shrill bats were upon the wing,
And soon dark night would slay the evening,
And in dark gardens sang the nightingale
Her little-heeded, oft-repeated tale.

And with the last of all the hunter went,
Who, wondering at the strange sight he had seen,
Prayed an old man to tell him what it meant,
Both why the vanquished man so slain had been,
And if the maiden were an earthly queen,
Or rather what much more she seemed to be,
No sharer in the world's mortality.

"Stranger," said he, "I pray she soon may die
Whose lovely youth has slain so many an one!
King Schœneus' daughter is she verily,
Who when her eyes first looked upon the sun
Was fain to end her life but new begun,
For he had vowed to leave but men alone
Sprung from his loins when he from earth was gone.

"Therefore he bade one leave her in the wood,
And let wild things deal with her as they might,
But this being done, some cruel god thought good
To save her beauty in the world's despite:
Folk say that her, so delicate and white
As now she is, a rough root-grubbing bear
Amidst her shapeless cubs at first did rear.

"In course of time the woodfolk slew her nurse,
And to their rude abode the youngling brought,
And reared her up to be a kingdom's curse,
Who grown a woman, of no kingdom thought,
But armed and swift, 'mid beasts destruction wrought,

Nor spared two shaggy centaur kings to slay
To whom her body seemed an easy prey.

"So to this city, led by fate, she came
Whom known by signs, whereof I cannot tell,
King Schœneus for his child at last did claim,
Nor otherwhere since that day doth she dwell
Sending too many a noble soul to hell—
What! thine eyes glisten! what then, thinkest thou
Her shining head unto the yoke to bow?

"Listen, my son, and love some other maid,
For she the saffron gown will never wear,
And on no flower-strewn couch shall she be laid,
Nor shall her voice make glad a lover's eye:
Yet if of Death thou hast not any fear,
Yea, rather, if thou lovest him utterly,
Thou still may'st woo her ere thou com'st to die,

"Like him that on this day thou sawest lie dead;
For, fearing as I deem the Sea-born One,
The maid has vowed e'en such a man to wed
As in the course her swift feet can outrun,
But whoso fails herein, his days are done:
He came the nighest that was slain to-day,
Although with him I deem she did but play.

Saffron gown. Worn by a bride.
Sea-born One. Venus, the goddess of love, who sprang from the foam of the sea.

"Behold, such mercy Atalanta gives
To those that long to win her loveliness;
Be wise! be sure that many a maid there lives
Gentler than she, of beauty little less,
Whose swimming eyes thy loving words shall bless,
When in some garden, knee set close to knee,
Thou sing'st the song that love may teach to thee."

So to the hunter spake that ancient man,
And left him for his own home presently:
But he turned round, and through the moonlight wan
Reached the thick wood, and there 'twixt tree and tree
Distraught he passed the long night feverishly,
'Twixt sleep and waking, and at dawn arose
To wage hot war against his speechless foes.

There to the hart's flank seemed his shaft to grow,
As panting down the broad green glades he flew,
There by his horn the Dryads well might know
His thrust against the bear's heart had been true,
And there Adonis' bane his javelin slew,
But still in vain through rough and smooth he went,
For none the more his restlessness was spent.

So wandering, he to Argive cities came,
And in the lists with valiant men he stood,
And by great deeds he won him praise and fame,
And heaps of wealth for little-valued blood;
But none of all these things, or life, seemed good

Adonis' bane. The boar which gored him in the woods.

Unto his heart, where still unsatisfied
A ravenous longing warred with fear and pride.

Therefore it happed when but a month had gone
Since he had left King Schœneus' city old,
In hunting-gear again, again alone
The forest-bordered meads did he behold,
Where still mid thoughts of August's quivering gold
Folk hoed the wheat, and clipped the vine in trust
Of faint October's purple-foaming must.

And once again he passed the peaceful gate,
While to his beating heart his lips did lie,
That owning not victorious love and fate,
Said, half aloud, "And here too must I try,
To win of alien men the mastery,
And gather for my head fresh meed of fame
And cast new glory on my father's name."

In spite of that, how beat his heart when first
Folk said to him, "And art thou come to see
That which still makes our city's name accurst
Among all mothers for its cruelty?
Then know indeed that fate is good to thee
Because to-morrow a new luckless one
Against the whitefoot maid is pledged to run."

So on the morrow with no curious eyes
As once he did, that piteous sight he saw,
Nor did that wonder in his heart arise

As toward the goal the conquering maid 'gan draw,
Nor did he gaze upon her eyes with awe,
Too full the pain of longing filled his heart
For fear or wonder there to have a part.

But O, how long the night was ere it went!
How long it was before the dawn begun
Showed to the wakening birds the sun's intent
That not in darkness should the world be done!
And then, and then, how long before the sun
Bade silently the toilers of the earth
Get forth to fruitless cares or empty mirth!

And long it seemed that in the market-place
He stood and saw the chaffering folk go by,
Ere from the ivory throne King Schœneus' face
Looked down upon the murmur royally,
But then came trembling that the time was nigh
When he midst pitying looks his love must claim,
And jeering voices must salute his name.

But as the throng he pierced to gain the throne,
His alien face distraught and anxious told
What hopeless errand he was bound upon,
And, each to each, folk whispered to behold
His godlike limbs; nay, and one woman old
As he went by must pluck him by the sleeve
And pray him yet that wretched love to leave.

For sidling up she said, "Canst thou live twice,
Fair son? canst thou have joyful youth again,
That thus thou goest to the sacrifice
Thyself the victim? nay then, all in vain
Thy mother bore her longing and her pain,
And one more maiden on the earth must dwell
Hopeless of joy, nor fearing death and hell.

"O, fool, thou knowest not the compact then
That with the three-formed goddess she has made
To keep her from the loving lips of men,
And in no saffron gown to be arrayed,
And therewithal with glory to be paid,
And love of her the moonlit river sees
White 'gainst the shadow of the formless trees.

"Come back, and I myself will pray for thee
Unto the sea-born framer of delights,
To give thee her who on the earth may be
The fairest stirrer up to death and fights,
To quench with hopeful days and joyous nights
The flame that doth thy youthful heart consume:
Come back, nor give thy beauty to the tomb."

How should he listen to her earnest speech?
Words, such as he not once or twice had said
Unto himself, whose meaning scarce could reach
The firm abode of that sad hardihead—

The three-formed goddess. Diana, the maiden goddess, never conquered by love.

He turned about, and through the marketstead
Swiftly he passed, until before the throne
In the cleared space he stood at last alone.

Then said the King, "Stranger, what dost thou here?
Have any of my folk done ill to thee?
Or art thou of the forest men in fear?
Or art thou of the sad fraternity
Who still will strive my daughter's mates to be,
Staking their lives to win to earthly bliss
The lonely maid, the friend of Artemis?"

"O King," he said, "thou sayest the word indeed;
Nor will I quit the strife till I have won
My sweet delight, or death to end my need.
And know that I am called Milanion,
Of King Amphidamas the well-loved son:
So fear not that to thy old name, O King,
Much loss or shame my victory will bring."

"Nay, Prince," said Schœneus, "welcome to this land
Thou wert indeed, if thou wert here to try
Thy strength 'gainst some one mighty of his hand;
Nor would we grudge thee well-won mastery.
But now, why wilt thou come to me to die,
And at my door lay down thy luckless head,
Swelling the band of the unhappy dead,

"Whose curses even now my heart doth fear?
Lo, I am old, and know what life can be,

And what a bitter thing is death anear.
O Son! be wise, and hearken unto me,
And if no other can be dear to thee,
At least as now, yet is the world full wide,
And bliss in seeming hopeless hearts may hide:

"But if thou losest life, then all is lost."
"Nay, King," Milanion said, "thy words are vain.
Doubt not that I have counted well the cost.
But say, on what day wilt thou that I gain
Fulfilled delight, or death to end my pain?
Right glad were I if it could be to-day,
And all my doubts at rest for ever lay."

"Nay," said King Schœneus, "thus it shall not be,
But rather shalt thou let a month go by,
And weary with thy prayers for victory
What god thou know'st the kindest and most nigh.
So doing, still perchance thou shalt not die:
And with my goodwill wouldst thou have the maid,
For of the equal gods I grow afraid.

"And until then, O Prince, be thou my guest,
And all these troublous things awhile forget."
"Nay," said he, "couldst thou give my soul good rest,
And on mine head a sleepy garland set,
Then had I 'scaped the meshes of the net,
Nor shouldst thou hear from me another word;
But now, make sharp thy fearful heading sword.

"Yet will I do what son of man may do,
And promise all the gods may most desire,
That to myself I may at least be true;
And on that day my heart and limbs so tire,
With utmost strain and measureless desire,
That, at the worst, I may but fall asleep
When in the sunlight round that sword shall sweep."

He went with that, nor anywhere would bide,
But unto Argos restlessly did wend;
And there, as one who lays all hope aside,
Because the leech has said his life must end,
Silent farewell he bade to foe and friend,
And took his way unto the restless sea,
For there he deemed his rest and help might be.

Upon the shore of Argolis there stands
A temple to the goddess that he sought,
That, turned unto the lion-bearing lands,
Fenced from the east, of cold winds hath no thought,
Though to no homestead there the sheaves are brought,
No groaning press torments the close-clipp'd murk,
Lonely the fane stands, far from all men's work.

Pass through a close, set thick with myrtle-trees,
Through the brass doors that guard the holy place,
And entering, hear the washing of the seas

Murk. Shade.

That twice a day rise high above the base,
And with the south-west urging them, embrace
The marble feet of her that standeth there
That shrink not, naked though they be and fair.

Small is the fane through which the seawind sings
About Queen Venus' well-wrought image white,
But hung around are many precious things,
The gifts of those who, longing for delight,
Have hung them there within the goddess' sight,
And in return have taken at her hands
The living treasures of the Grecian lands.

And thither now has come Milanion,
And showed unto the priests' wide open eyes
Gifts fairer than all those that there have shone,
Silk cloths, inwrought with Indian fantasies,
And bowls inscribed with sayings of the wise
Above the deeds of foolish living things,
And mirrors fit to be the gifts of kings.

And now before the Sea-born One he stands,
By the sweet veiling smoke made dim and soft,
And while the incense trickles from his hands,
And while the odorous smoke-wreaths hang aloft,
Thus doth he pray to her: "O Thou, who oft
Hast holpen man and maid in their distress,
Despise me not for this my wretchedness!

"O goddess, among us who dwell below,
Kings and great men, great for a little while,
Have pity on the lowly heads that bow,
Nor hate the hearts that love them without guile;
Wilt thou be worse than these, and is thy smile
A vain device of him who set thee here,
An empty dream of some artificer?

"O, great one, some men love, and are ashamed,
Some men are weary of the bonds of love;
Yea, and by some men lightly art thou blamed,
That from thy toils their lives they cannot move,
And 'mid the ranks of men their manhood prove.
Alas! O goddess, if thou slayest me
What new immortal can I serve but thee?

"Think then, will it bring honour to thy head
If folk say, 'Everything aside he cast
And to all fame and honour was he dead,
And to his one hope now is dead at last,
Since all unholpen he is gone and past:
Ah, the gods love not man, for certainly,
He to his helper did not cease to cry.'

"Nay, but thou wilt help; they who died before
Not single-hearted as I deem came here,
Therefore unthanked they laid their gifts before
Thy stainless feet, still shivering with their fear,
Lest in their eyes their true thought might appear,

Who sought to be the lords of that fair town,
Dreaded of men and winners of renown.

"O Queen, thou knowest I pray not for this:
O set us down together in some place
Where not a voice can break our heaven of bliss,
Where nought but rocks and I can see her face,
Softening beneath the marvel of thy grace,
Where not a foot our vanished steps can track—
The golden age, the golden age come back!

"O fairest, hear me now who do thy will,
Plead for thy rebel that he be not slain,
But live and love and be thy servant still;
Ah, give her joy and take away my pain,
And thus two long-enduring servants gain.
An easy thing this is to do for me,
What need of my vain words to weary thee!

"But none the less, this place will I not leave
Until I needs must go my death to meet,
Or at thy hands some happy sign receive
That in great joy we twain may one day greet
Thy presence here and kiss thy silver feet,
Such as we deem thee, fair beyond all words,
Victorious o'er our servants and our lords."

Then from the altar back a space he drew,
But from the Queen turned not his face away,
But 'gainst a pillar leaned, until the blue

That arched the sky, at ending of the day,
Was turned to ruddy gold and changing grey,
And clear, but low, the nigh-ebbed windless sea
In the still evening murmured ceaselessly.

And there he stood when all the sun was down,
Nor had he moved when the dim golden light,
Like the far lustre of a godlike town,
Had left the world to seeming hopeless night,
Nor would he move the more when wan moonlight
Streamed through the pillars for a little while,
And lighted up the white Queen's changeless smile.

Nought noted he the shallow flowing sea
As step by step it set the wrack a-swim,
The yellow torchlight nothing noted he
Wherein with fluttering gown and half-bared limb
The temple damsels sung their midnight hymn,
And nought the doubled stillness of the fane
When they were gone and all was hushed again.

But when the waves had touched the marble base,
And steps the fish swim over twice a-day,
The dawn beheld him sunken in his place
Upon the floor; and sleeping there he lay,
Not heeding aught the little jets of spray
The roughened sea brought nigh, across him cast,
For as one dead all thought from him had passed.

Yet long before the sun had showed his head,
Long ere the varied hangings on the wall
Had gained once more their blue and green and red,
He rose as one some well-known sign doth call
When war upon the city's gates doth fall,
And scarce like one fresh risen out of sleep,
He 'gan again his broken watch to keep.

Then he turned round; not for the sea-gull's cry
That wheeled above the temple in his flight,
Not for the fresh south wind that lovingly
Breathed on the new-born day and dying night,
But some strange hope 'twixt fear and great delight
Drew round his face, now flushed, now pale and wan,
And still constrained his eyes the sea to scan.

Now a faint light lit up the southern sky,
Not sun or moon, for all the world was grey,
But this a bright cloud seemed, that drew anigh,
Lighting the dull waves that beneath it lay
As toward the temple still it took its way,
And still grew greater, till Milanion
Saw nought for dazzling light that round him shone.

But as he staggered with his arms outspread,
Delicious unnamed odours breathed around
For languid happiness he bowed his head,
And with wet eyes sank down upon the ground,
Nor wished for aught, nor any dream he found

To give him reason for that happiness,
Or make him ask more knowledge of his bliss.

At last his eyes were cleared, and he could see
Through happy tears the goddess face to face
With that faint image of Divinity,
Whose well-wrought smile and dainty changeless grace
Until that morn so gladdened all the place;
Then he unwitting cried aloud her name
And covered up his eyes for fear and shame.

But through the stillness he her voice could hear
Piercing his heart with joy scarce bearable,
That said, "Milanion, wherefore dost thou fear,
I am not hard to those who love me well;
List to what I a second time will tell,
And thou mayest hear perchance, and live to save
The cruel maiden from a loveless grave.

"See, by my feet three golden apples lie—
Such fruit among the heavy roses falls,
Such fruit my watchful damsels carefully
Store up within the best loved of my walls,
Ancient Damascus, where the lover calls
Above my unseen head, and faint and light
The rose-leaves flutter round me in the night.

"And note, that these are not alone most fair
With heavenly gold, but longing strange they bring
Unto the hearts of men, who will not care,
Beholding these, for any once-loved thing
Till round the shining sides their fingers cling.
And thou shalt see thy well-girt swiftfoot maid
By sight of these amid her glory stayed.

"For bearing these within a scrip with thee,
When first she heads thee from the starting-place
Cast down the first one for her eyes to see,
And when she turns aside make on apace,
And if again she heads thee in the race
Spare not the other two to cast aside
If she not long enough behind will bide.

"Farewell, and when has come the happy time
That she Diana's raiment must unbind
And all the world seems blessed with Saturn's clime,
And thou with eager arms about her twined
Beholdest first her grey eyes growing kind,
Surely, O trembler, thou shalt scarcely then
Forget the Helper of unhappy men."

Milanion raised his head at this last word,
For now so soft and kind she seemed to be
No longer of her Godhead was he feared;
Too late he looked, for nothing could he see

But the white image glimmering doubtfully
In the departing twilight cold and grey,
And those three apples on the steps that lay.

These then he caught up quivering with delight,
Yet fearful lest it all might be a dream,
And though aweary with the watchful night,
And sleepless nights of longing, still did deem
He could not sleep; but yet the first sunbeam
That smote the fane across the heaving deep
Shone on him laid in calm untroubled sleep.

But little ere the noontide did he rise,
And why he felt so happy scarce could tell
Until the gleaming apples met his eyes.
Then leaving the fair place where this befell
Oft he looked back as one who loved it well,
Then homeward to the haunts of men 'gan wend
To bring all things unto a happy end.

Now has the lingering month at last gone by,
Again are all folk round the running place,
Nor other seems the dismal pageantry
Than heretofore, but that another face
Looks o'er the smooth course ready for the race,
For now, beheld of all, Milanion
Stands on the spot he twice has looked upon.

But yet—what change is this that holds the maid?
Does she indeed see in his glittering eye
More than disdain of the sharp shearing blade,
Some happy hope of help and victory?
The others seemed to say, "We come to die,
Look down upon us for a little while,
That dead, we may bethink us of thy smile."

But he—what look of mastery was this
He cast on her? why were his lips so red?
Why was his face so flushed with happiness?
So looks not one who deems himself but dead,
E'en if to death he bows a willing head;
So rather looks a god well pleased to find
Some earthly damsel fashioned to his mind.

Why must she drop her lids before his gaze,
And even as she casts adown her eyes
Redden to note his eager glance of praise,
And wish that she were clad in other guise?
Why must the memory to her heart arise
Of things unnoticed when they first were heard,
Some lover's song, some answering maiden's word?

What makes these longings, vague, without a name,
And this vain pity never felt before,
This sudden languor, this contempt of fame,
This tender sorrow for the time past o'er,
These doubts that grow each minute more and more?

Why does she tremble as the time grows near,
And weak defeat and woeful victory fear?

But while she seemed to hear her beating heart,
Above their heads the trumpet blast rang out
And forth they sprang; and she must play her part.
Then flew her white feet, knowing not a doubt,
Though slackening once, she turned her head about,
But then she cried aloud and faster fled
Than e'er before, and all men deemed him dead.

But with no sound he raised aloft his hand,
And thence what seemed a ray of light there flew
And past the maid rolled on along the sand;
Then trembling she her feet together drew
And in her heart a strong desire there grew
To have the toy; some god she thought had given
That gift to her, to make of earth a heaven.

Then from the course with eager steps she ran,
And in her odorous bosom laid the gold.
But when she turned again, the great-limbed man
Now well ahead she failed not to behold,
And mindful of her glory waxing cold,
Sprang up and followed him in hot pursuit,
Though with one hand she touched the golden fruit.

Note too, the bow that she was wont to bear
She laid aside to grasp the glittering prize,

And o'er her shoulder from the quiver fair
Three arrows fell and lay before her eyes
Unnoticed, as amidst the people's cries
She sprang to head the strong Milanion,
Who now the turning-post had well-nigh won.

But as he set his mighty hand on it
White fingers underneath his own were laid,
And white limbs from his dazzled eyes did flit,
Then he the second fruit cast by the maid,
But she ran on awhile, then as afraid
Wavered and stopped, and turned and made no stay,
Until the globe with its bright fellow lay.

Then, as a troubled glance she cast around
Now far ahead the Argive could she see,
And in her garment's hem one hand she wound
To keep the double prize, and strenuously
Sped o'er the course, and little doubt had she
To win the day, though now but scanty space
Was left betwixt him and the winning place.

Short was the way unto such winged feet,
Quickly she gained upon him till at last
He turned about her eager eyes to meet
And from his hand the third fair apple cast.
She wavered not, but turned and ran so fast
After the prize that should her bliss fulfil,
That in her hand it lay ere it was still.

Nor did she rest, but turned about to win
Once more, an unblest woeful victory—
And yet—and yet—why does her breath begin
To fail her, and her feet drag heavily?
Why fails she now to see if far or nigh
The goal is? why do her grey eyes grow dim?
Why do these tremors run through every limb?

She spreads her arms abroad some stay to find
Else must she fall, indeed, and findeth this,
A strong man's arms about her body twined,
Nor may she shudder now to feel his kiss,
So wrapped she is in new unbroken bliss:
Made happy that the foe the prize hath won,
She weeps glad tears for all her glory done.

SHATTER the trumpet, hew adown the posts!
Upon the brazen altar break the sword,
And scatter incense to appease the ghosts
Of those who died here by their own award.
Bring forth the image of the mighty Lord,
And her who unseen o'er the runners hung,
And did a deed for ever to be sung.

Here are the gathered folk, make no delay,
Open King Schœneus' well-filled treasury,

Bring out the gifts long hid from light of day,
The golden bowls o'erwrought with imagery,
Gold chains, and unguents brought from over sea,
The saffron gown the old Phœnician brought,
Within the temple of the Goddess wrought.

O ye, O damsels, who shall never see
Her, that Love's servant bringeth now to you,
Returning from another victory,
In some cool bower do all that now is due!
Since she in token of her service new
Shall give to Venus offerings rich enow,
Her maiden zone, her arrows, and her bow.

So when his last word's echo died away,
The growing wind at end of that wild day
Alone they heard, for silence bound them all;
Yea, on their hearts a weight had seemed to fall,
As unto the scarce-hoped felicity
The tale drew round—the end of life so nigh,
The aim so little, and the joy so vain—
For as a child's unmeasured joy brings pain
Unto a grown man holding grief at bay,
So the old fervent story of that day
Brought pain half-sweet, to these: till now the fire
Upon the hearth sent up a flickering spire
Of ruddy flame, as fell the burned-through logs,
And, waked by sudden silence, grey old dogs,
The friends of this or that man, rose and fawned
On hands they knew; withal once more there dawned
The light of common day on those old hearts,
And all were ready now to play their parts,
And take what feeble joy might yet remain
In place of all they once had hoped to gain.

Now on the second day that these did meet
March was a-dying through soft days and sweet,
Too hopeful for the wild days yet to be;
But in the hall that ancient company,
Not lacking younger folk that day at least,
Softened by spring were gathered at the feast,
And as the time drew on, throughout the hall
A horn was sounded, giving note to all
That they at last the looked-for tale should hear.

Then spake a Wanderer, "O kind hosts and dear,
Hearken a little unto such a tale
As folk with us will tell in every vale
About the yule-tide fire, when the snow,
Deep in the passes, letteth men to go
From place to place: now there few great folk be,
Although we upland men have memory
Of ills kings did us; yet as now indeed
Few have much wealth, few are in utter need.
Like the wise ants a kingless, happy folk
We long have been, not galled by any yoke,
But the white leaguer of the winter tide
Whereby all men at home are bound to bide.
—Alas, my folly! how I talk of it,
As though from this place where to-day we sit
The way thereto was short—Ah, would to God
Upon the snow-freed herbage now I trod!
But pardon, sirs; the time goes swiftly by,
Hearken a tale of conquering destiny."

THE MAN BORN TO BE KING

ARGUMENT

It was foretold to a great king that he who should reign after him should be low-born and poor; which thing came to pass in the end, for all that the king could do.

A KING there was in days of old
Who ruled wide lands, nor lacked for gold,
Nor honour, nor much-longed-for praise,
And his days were called happy days,
So peaceable his kingdoms were,
While others wrapt in war and fear
Fell ever unto worse and worse.
  Therefore his city was the nurse
Of all that men then had of lore,
And none were driven from his door
That seemed well skilled in anything;
So of the sages was he king;
And from this learned man and that,
Little by little, lore he gat,
And many a lordless, troubled land
Fell scarce loth to his dreaded hand.
  Midst this it chanced that, on a day,
Clad in his glittering gold array,

He held a royal festival;
And nigh him in his glorious hall
Beheld his sages most and least,
Sitting much honoured at the feast.
But mid the faces so well known,
Of men he well might call his own,
He saw a little wizened man
With face grown rather grey than wan
From lapse of years, beardless was he,
And bald as is the winter tree;
But his two deep-set, glittering eyes
Gleamed at the sight of mysteries
None knew but he; few words he said,
And unto those small heed was paid;
But the King, young, yet old in guile,
Failed not to note a flickering smile
Upon his face, as now and then
He turned him from the learned men
Toward the King's seat, so thought to know
What new thing he might have to show;
And presently, the meat being done,
He bade them bring him to his throne,
And when before him he was come,
He said, "Be welcome to my home;
What is thine art, canst thou in rhyme
Tell stories of the ancient time?
Or dost thou chronicle old wars?
Or know'st thou of the change of stars?
Or seek'st thou the transmuting stone?
Or canst thou make the shattered bone

Grow whole, and dying men live on
Till years like thine at last are won?
Or what thing bring'st thou to me here,
Where nought but men of lore are dear
To me and mine?"
"O King," said he,
"But few things know I certainly,
Though I have toiled for many a day
Along the hard and doubtful way
That bringeth wise men to the grave:
And now for all the years I gave,
To know all things that man can learn,
A few months' learned life I earn,
Nor feel much liker to a god
Than when beside my sheep I trod
Upon the thymy, wind-swept down.
Yet am I come unto thy town
To tell thee somewhat that I learned
As on the stars I gazed, and yearned
To cast this weary body off,
With all its chains of mock and scoff
And creeping death—for as I read
The sure decrees with joy and dread,
Somewhat I saw writ down of thee,
And who shall have the sovereignty
When thou art gone."
"Nay," said the King,
"Speak quick and tell me of the thing."
"Sire," said the sage, "thine ancient line
Thou holdest as a thing divine,

So long and undisturbed it is,
But now shall there be end to this,
For surely in my glittering text
I read that he who shall sit next,
On this thine ancient throne and high,
Shall be no better born than I
Whose grandsire none remembereth,
Nor where my father first drew breath."
"Yea," said the King, "and this may be;
Yet, O Sage, ere I credit thee,
Some token certes must thou show,
Or tell me what I think to know,
Alone, among all folk alive;
Then surely great gifts will I give
To thee, and make thee head of all
Who watch the planets rise and fall."
"Bid these stand backward from thy throne,"
The sage said, "then to thee alone
Long hidden matters will I tell;
And then, if thou believest, well—
And if thou dost not—well also;
No gift I ask, but leave to go,
For strange to me is this thy state,
And for thyself, thou well may'st hate
My crabbed age and misery."
"Well," said the King, "let this thing be;
And ye, my masters, stand aback!
For of the fresh air have I lack,
And in my pleasance would I walk
To hearken this grave elder's talk

And gain new lore."
Therewith he rose
And led the way unto a close,
Shaded with grey-leaved olive-trees;
And when they were amidst of these
He turned about and said, "Speak, friend,
And of thy folly make an end,
And take this golden chain therefore."
"Rightly thou namest my weak lore,"
The Sage said, "therefore to the end
Be wise, and what the fates may send
Take thou, nor struggle in the net
Wherein thine helpless feet are set!
—Hearken! a year is well-nigh done
Since, at the hottest of the sun,
Stood Anthony beneath this tree,
And took a jewelled cup of thee,
And drank swift death in guise of wine;
Since he, most trusted of all thine,
At last too full of knowledge grew,
And chiefly, he of all men knew
How the Earl Marshal Hugh had died,
Since he had drawn him on to ride
Into a bushment of his foes,
To meet death from unnumbered blows."
"Thou knowest that by me he died,"
The King said, "how if now I cried,
Help! the magician slayeth me?
Swiftly should twenty sword-blades be
Clashing with thy ribs, and thou

Nearer to death than even now."
"Not thus, O King, I fear to die,"
The Sage said; "Death shall pass me by
Many a year yet, because perchance,
I fear not aught his clattering dance,
And have enough of weary days.
—But thou—farewell, and win the praise
Of sages, by thy hearkening
With heed to this most certain thing.
Fear not because this thing I know,
For to my grey tower back I go
High raised above the heathy hills
Where the great erne the swift hare kills,
Or stoops upon the new-yeaned lamb;
There almost as a god I am
Unto few folk, who hear thy name
Indeed, but know nought of thy fame,
Nay, scarce if thou be man or beast."
So saying, back unto the feast
He turned, and went adown the hall,
Not heeding any gibe or call;
And left the palace and the town
With face turned toward his windy down.
Back to the hall, too, the King went,
With eyes upon the pavement bent
In pensive thought, delighting not
In riches and his kingly lot;
But thinking how his days began,
And of the lonely souls of man.

But time passed, and midst this and that,
The wise man's message he forgat;
And as a king he lived his life,
And took to him a noble wife
Of the kings' daughters, rich and fair.
And they being wed for nigh a year,
And she now growing great with child,
It happed unto the forest wild
This king with many folk must ride
At ending of the summer-tide;
There boar and hart they brought to bay,
And had right noble prize that day;
But when the noon was now long past,
And the thick woods grew overcast,
They roused the mightiest hart of all.
Then loudly 'gan the King to call
Unto his huntsmen, not to leave
That mighty beast for dusk nor eve
Till they had won him; with which word
His horn he blew, and forth he spurred,
Taking no thought of most or least,
But only of that royal beast.
And over rough and smooth he rode,
Nor yet for anything abode,
Till dark night swallowing up the day
With blindness his swift course must stay.
Nor was there with him any one,
So far his fair steed had outrun
The best of all his hunting-folk.
So, glancing at the stars that broke

'Twixt the thick branches here and there,
Backward he turned, and peered with care
Into the darkness, but saw nought,
Nor heard his folk, and therewith thought
His bed must be the brake leaves brown.
Then in a while he lighted down,
And felt about a little space,
If he might find a softer place;
But as he groped from tree to tree
Some glimmering light he seemed to see
'Twixt the dark stems, and thither turned,
If yet perchance some wood-fire burned
Within a peasant's hut, where he
Might find, amidst their misery,
Rough food, or shelter at the least.
So, leading on his wearied beast,
Blindly he crept from tree to tree,
Till slowly grew that light to be
The thing he looked for, and he found
A hut on a cleared space of ground,
From whose half-opened door there streamed
The light that erst far off had gleamed.
Then of that shelter was he fain,
But just as he made shift to gain
The open space in front of it,
A shadow o'er the grass did flit,
And on the wretched threshold stood
A big man, with a bar of wood
In his right hand, who seemed as though
He got him ready for a blow;

But ere he spoke the King cried, "Friend,
May God good hap upon thee send,
If thou wilt give me rest this night,
And food according to thy might."
"Nay," said the carle, "my wife lieth
In labour, and is nigh her death:
Nor canst thou enter here at all,
But nearby is my asses' stall,
Who on this night bide in the town;
There, if thou wilt, mayst thou lie down,
And sleep until the dawn of day,
And I will bring thee what I may
Of food and drink."
Then said the King,
"Thanked be thou; neither for nothing
Shalt thou this good deed do to me."
"Nay," said the carle, "let these things be,
Surely I think before the morn,
To be too weary and forlorn
For gold much heart in me to put."
With that he turned, and from the hut
Brought out a lantern, and rye-bread,
And wine, and showed the King a shed,
Strewed with a litter of dry brake:
Withal he muttered, for his sake,
Unto Our Lady some rude prayer,
And turned about and left him there.
So when the rye-bread, nowise fine,
The King had munched, and with green wine
Had quenched his thirst, his horse he tied

Unto a post, and there beside
He fell asleep upon the brake.
But in an hour did he awake,
Astonied with an unnamed fear,
For words were ringing in his ear
Like the last echo of a scream,
"*Take ! take !*" but of the vanished dream
No image was there left to him.
Then, trembling sore in every limb,
Did he arise, and drew his sword,
And passed forth on the forest sward.
And cautiously about he crept;
But he heard nought at all, except
Some groaning of the woodman's wife,
And forest sounds well known, but rife
With terror to the lonely soul.
Then he lay down again, to roll
His limbs within his huntsman's cloak;
And slept again, and once more woke
To tremble with that unknown fear,
And other echoing words to hear—
"*Give up ! give up !*" nor anything
Showed more why these strange words should ring
About him. Then he sat upright,
Bewildered, gazing through the night,
Until his weary eyes, grown dim,
Showed not the starlit tree-trunks slim
Against the black wood, grey and plain;
And into sleep he sank again,

And woke not soon: but sleeping dreamed
That he awoke, nor other seemed
The place he woke in but that shed,
And there beside his bracken bed
He seemed to see the ancient sage
Shrivelled yet more with untold age,
Who bending down his head to him
Said, with a mocking smile and grim,—
"Take, or give up; what matters it?
This child new-born shall surely sit
Upon thy seat when thou art gone,
And dwelling 'twixt straight walls of stone."
Again the King woke at that word
And sat up, panting and afeard,
And staring out into the night,
Where yet the woods thought not of light;
And fain he was to cast off sleep,
Such visions from his eyes to keep.
Heavy his head grew none the less,
'Twixt 'wildering thoughts and weariness,
And soon he fell asleep once more,
Nor dreamed, nor woke again, before
The sun shone through the forest trees;
And, shivering in the morning breeze,
He blinked with just-awakened eyes,
And pondering on those mysteries,
Unto the woodman's hut he went.

Him he found kneeling down, and bent
In moody grief above a bed,

Whereon his wife lay, stark and dead,
Whose soul near morn had passed away;
And 'twixt the dead and living lay
A new-born man-child, fair and great.
So in the door the King did wait
To watch the man, who had no heed
Of this or that, so sore did bleed
The new-made wound within his heart.
But as the King gazed, for his part
He did but see his threatened foe,
And ever hard his heart did grow
With deadly hate and wilfulness:
And sight of that poor man's distress
Made it the harder, as of nought
But that unbroken line he thought
Of which he was the last: withal
His scornful troubled eyes did fall
Upon that nest of poverty,
Where nought of joy he seemed to see.
  On straw the poor dead woman lay;
The door alone let in the day,
Showing the trodden earthen floor,
A board on trestles weak and poor,
Three stumps of tree for stool or chair,
A half-glazed pipkin, nothing fair,
A bowl of porridge by the wife,
Untouched by lips that lacked for life,
A platter and a bowl of wood;
And in the further corner stood
A bow cut from the wych-elm tree,

A holly club, and arrows three
Ill pointed, heavy, spliced with thread.

Ah! soothly, well remembered
Was that unblissful wretched home,
Those four bare walls, in days to come;
And often in the coming years
He called to mind the pattering tears
That, on the rent old sackcloth cast
About the body, fell full fast,
'Twixt half-meant prayers and curses wild,
And that weak wailing of the child,
His threatened dreaded enemy,
The mighty king that was to be.
But as he gazed unsoftened there,
With hate begot of scorn and care,
Loudly he heard a great horn blow,
And his own hunting call did know,
And soon began the shouts to hear
Of his own people drawing near.
Then lifting up his horn, he blew
A long shrill point, but as he threw
His head aback, beheld his folk,
Who from the close-set thicket broke
And o'er the cleared space swiftly passed,
With shouts that he was found at last.
Then turned the carle his doleful face,
And slowly rising in his place,
Drew thwart his eyes his fingers strong,
And on that gay-dressed glittering throng

Gazed stupidly, as still he heard
The name of King; but said no word.
But his guest spoke, "Sirs, well be ye!
This luckless woodman, whom ye see,
Gave me good harbour through the night
And such poor victual as he might;
Therefore shall he have more than gold
For his reward; since dead and cold
His helpmate lies who last night died.
See now the youngling by her side;
Him will I take and rear him so
That he shall no more lie alow
In straw, or from the beech-tree dine,
But rather use white linen fine
And silver plate; and with the sword
Shall learn to serve some King or Lord.
How say'st thou, good man?"
"Sire," he said,
Weeping, but shamefaced,—"Since here dead
She lies, that erst kept house for me,
E'en as thou willest let it be;
Though I had hoped to have a son
To help me get the day's work done.
And now, indeed, forth must he go
If unto manhood he should grow,
And lonely I must wander forth,
To whom, east, west, and south, and north
Are all alike: forgive it me
If little thanks I give to thee
Who scarce can thank great God in heaven

For what is left of what was given."
Small heed unto him the King gave,
But trembling in his haste to have
The body of his enemy,
Said to an old squire, "Bring to me
The babe, and give the good man this
Wherewith to gain a little bliss,
In place of all his troubles gone,
Nor need he now be long alone."
The carle's rough face, at chink of gold,
Lit up, though still did he behold
The wasted body lying there;
But stooping, a rough box, foursquare,
Made of old wood and lined with hay,
Wherein the helpless infant lay,
He raised, and gave it to the squire
Who on the floor cast down his hire,
Nor sooth dared murmur aught the while,
But turning smiled a grim hard smile
To see the carle his pieces count
Still weeping: so did all men mount
And turning round into the wood
Forgat him and his drearihood,
And soon were far off from the hut.

Then coming out, the door he shut
Behind him, and adown a glade,
Towards a rude hermitage he made
To fetch the priest unto his need,
To bury her and say her bede—

So when all things that he might do
Were done aright, heavy with woe,
He left the woodland hut behind
To take such chance as he might find
In other lands, forgetting all
That in that forest did befall.

But through the wild wood rode the King,
Moody and thinking on the thing,
Nor free from that unreasoning fear;
Till now, when they had drawn anear
The open country, and could see
The road run on from close to lea,
And lastly by a wooden bridge
A long way from that heathy ridge
Cross over a deep lowland stream—
Then in his eyes there came a gleam,
And his hand fell upon his sword,
And turning round to squire and lord
He said, "Ride, sirs, the way is clear,
Nor of my people have I fear,
Nor do my foes range over wide;
And for myself fain would I ride
Right slowly homewards through the fields
Noting what this and that one yields;
While by my squire who bears the child
Lightly my way shall be beguiled.
For some nurse now he needs must have
This tender life of his to save;
And doubtless by the stream there is

Some house where he may dwell in bliss,
Till he grow old enough to learn
How gold and glory he may earn;
And grow, perchance, to be a lord."
With downcast eyes he spoke that word;
But forth they galloped speedily,
And he drew rein and stood to see
Their green coats lessening as they went.
This man unto the other bent,
Until mid dust and haze at last
Into a wavering mass they passed;
Then 'twixt the hedgerows vanished quite,
Just told of by the dust-cloud white
Rolled upwards 'twixt the elm-trunks slim.

Then turned the King about to him
Who held the child, noting again
The thing wherein he first had lain,
And on one side of it could see
A lion painted hastily
In red upon a ground of white,
As though of old it had been dight
For some lord's rough-wrought palisade;
But naked 'mid the hay was laid
The child, and had no mark or sign.
Then said the King, "My ancient line
Thou and thy sires through good and ill
Have served, and unto thee my will
Is law enough from day to day;
Ride nigh me harkening what I say."

He shook his rein and side by side
Down through the meadows did they ride,
And opening all his heart, the King
Told to the old man everything
Both of the sage, and of his dream;
Withal drawn nigh unto the stream,
He said, "Yet this shall never be,
For surely as thou lovest me,
Adown this water shall he float
With this rough box for ark and boat,
Then if mine old line he must spill
There let God save him if He will,
While I in no case shed his blood."
"Yea," said the squire, "thy words are good,
For the whole sin shall lie on me,
Who greater things would do for thee
If need there were; yet note, I pray,
It may be he will 'scape this day
And live; and what wouldst thou do then
If thou shouldst meet him among men?
I counsel thee to let him go
Since sure to nought thy will shall grow."
"Yea, yea," the King said, "let all be
That may be, if I once but see
This ark whirl in the eddies swift
Or tangled in the autumn drift
And wrong side up": but with that word
Their horse-hoofs on the plank he heard,
And swift across the bridge he rode,
And nigh the end of it abode,

Then turned to watch the old squire stop,
And leaning o'er the bridge-rail drop
The luckless child; he heard withal
A muttered word and plashing fall
And from the wakened child a cry,
And saw the cradle hurrying by,
Whirled round and sinking, but as yet
Holding the child, nor overset.
Now somewhat, soothly at the sight
Did the King doubt if he outright
Had rid him of his feeble foe,
But frowning did he turn to go
Unto his home, nor knew indeed
How better he might help his need;
And as unto his house he rode
Full little care for all he showed,
Still bidding Samuel the squire
Unto his bridle-hand ride nigher,
To whom he talked of careless things,
As unto such will talk great kings.
But when unto his palace gate
He came at last, thereby did wait
The chamberlain with eager eyes
Above his lips grown grave with lies,
In haste to tell him that the queen,
While in the wild-wood he had been,
Had borne a daughter unto him
Strong, fair of face, and straight of limb
So well at ease and glad thereat
His troubled dream he nigh forgat,

His troubled waking, and the ride
Unto the fateful river-side;
Or thought of all as little things
Unmeet to trouble souls of kings.

So passed the days, so passed the years
In such-like hopes, and such-like fears,
And such-like deeds in field and hall
As unto royal men befall,
And fourteen years have passed away
Since on the huddled brake he lay
And dreamed that dream, remembered now
Once and again, when slow and slow
The minutes of some sleepless night
Crawl toward the dawning of the light.

Remembered not on this sweet morn
When to the ringing of the horn,
Jingle of bits and mingled shout
Toward that same stream he rideth out
To see his grey-winged falcons fly.
So long he rode he drew anigh
A mill upon the river's brim,
That seemed a goodly place to him,
For o'er the oily smooth millhead
There hung the apples growing red,
And many an ancient apple-tree
Within the orchard could he see,
While the smooth millwalls white and black
Shook to the great wheel's measured clack,

And grumble of the gear within;
While o'er the roof that dulled that din
The doves sat crooning half the day,
And round the half-cut stack of hay
The sparrows fluttered twittering.
There smiling stayed the joyous King,
And since the autumn noon was hot
Thought good anigh that pleasant spot
To dine that day, and therewith sent
To tell the miller his intent:
Who held the stirrup of the King,
Bareheaded, joyful at the thing,
While from his horse he lit adown,
Then led him o'er an elm-beam brown,
New cut in February tide,
That crossed the stream from side to side.
So underneath the apple-trees
The King sat careless, well at ease,
And ate and drank right merrily.
To whom the miller drew anigh
Among the courtiers, bringing there
Such as he could of country fare,
Green yellowing plums from off his wall,
Wasp-bitten pears, the first to fall
From off the wavering spire-like tree,
Junkets, and cream and fresh honey.
Smiling the King regarded him,
For he was round-paunched, short of limb,
Red-faced, with long, lank flaxen hair;
But with him was a boy, right fair,

Grey-eyed, and yellow-haired, most like
Unto some Michael who doth strike
The dragon on a minster wall,
So sweet-eyed was he, and withal
So fearless of all things he seemed.
But when he saw him the King deemed
He scarce could be the miller's kin,
And laughing said, "Hast thou within
Thy dusty mill the dame who bore
This stripling in the days of yore,
For fain were I to see her now,
If she be liker him than thou?"
"Sire," said the miller, "that may be
And thou my dame shalt surely see;
But for the stripling, neither I
Begat him, nor my wife did lie
In labour when the lad was born,
But as an outcast and forlorn
We found him fourteen years to-day,
So quick the time has passed away."

Then the King, hearkening what he said,
A vanished day remembered,
And troubled grew his face thereat;
But while he thought of this and that
The man turned from him and was gone
And by him stood the lad alone;
At whom he gazed, and as their eyes
Met, a great horror 'gan arise
Within his heart, and back he shrank

And shuddering a deep draught he drank,
Scarce knowing if his royal wine
He touched, or juice of some hedge-vine.
But as his eyes he lifted up
From off his jewelled golden cup,
Once more the miller drew anigh,
By whom his wife went timidly
Bearing some burden in her hand;
So when before him she did stand
And he beheld her worn and old,
And black-haired, then that hair of gold,
Grey eyes, firm lips, and round cleft chin,
Brought stronger memory of his sin.
But the carle spake, "Dame, tell the King
How this befell, a little thing
The thoughts of such great folk to hold,
Speak out, and fear not to be bold."
"My tale," she said, "is short enow,
For this day fourteen year ago
Along this river-side I rode
From market to our poor abode,
Where we dwelt far from other men,
Since thinner was the country then
Than now it is; so as I went
And wearied o'er my panniers bent,
From out the stream a feeble cry
I heard, and therewith presently,
From off my mule's back could I see
This boy who standeth here by thee,
A naked, new-born infant, laid

In a rough ark that had been stayed
By a thick tangled bed of weed;
So pitying the youngling's need,
Dismounting, did I wade for him
Waist deep, whose ark now scarce did swim;
And he, with cold, and misery,
And hunger, was at point to die.
"Withal, I bare him to the mill
And cherished him, and had good will
To bring the babe up as mine own;
Since childless were we and alone,
And no one came to father it.
So oft have I rejoiced to sit
Beside the fire and watch him play.
And now, behold him!—but some day
I look to lose him, for, indeed,
I deem he comes of royal seed,
Unmeet for us: and now, my lord,
Have you heard every foolish word
About my son—this boy—whose name
Is Michael soothly, since he came
To us this day nigh Michaelmas.
—See, sire, the ark wherein he was!
Which I have kept."
Therewith she drew
A cloth away; but the King knew,
Long ere she moved, what he should see,
Nor looked, but seeming carelessly
Leaned on the board and hid his eyes.
But at the last did he arise

And saw the painted lion red,
Not faded, well remembered;
Withal he thought, "And who of these
Were with me then amongst the trees
To see this box?" but presently
He thought again that none but he
And the grey squire, old Samuel,
That painting could have noted well.
Since Samuel his coat had cast
About it, and therewith had passed
Throughout the forest on that day,
And not till all were well away
Had drawn it off before the King.
But changed and downcast at the thing
He left the lovely autumn place,
Still haunted by the new-found face
Of his old foe, and back he rode
Unto his ancient rich abode,
Forcing but dismal merriment
As midst his smiling lords he went;
Who yet failed not to note his mood,
So changed: and some men of the wood
Remembered them, but said not aught,
Yea, trembled lest their hidden thought
Some bird should learn, and carry it.

The morrow come, the King did sit
Alone, to talk with Samuel,
Who yet lived, gathering wage for hell.
He from the presence in a while

Came forth, and with his ugly smile
He muttered, "Well betide me, then,
St. Peter! they are lucky men
Who serve no kings, since they indeed
May damn themselves each for his need.
And will not he outlive this day
Whom the deep water could not slay,
Ere yet his lips had tasted food?"
With that a horse, both strong and good,
He gat of the King's equerry,
And toward the mill rode speedily.

There Michael by the mill-tail lay,
Watching the swift stream snatch away
His float from midst the careless dace;
But thinking of the thin, dark face,
That yesterday all men he saw
Gaze at with seeming love and awe;
Nor had he, wondering at the lords,
Lost one word of the housewife's words;
And still he noted that the King
Beheld him as a wondrous thing,
Strange to find there: so in his heart
He thought to play some royal part
In this wild play of life, and made
Stories, wherein great words he said,
And did great deeds in desperate fight.
But midst these thoughts there came in sight
He who had carried him of yore,
From out the woodman's broken door,

Dressed like a king's man, with fine gold
Touching his hard brown hands and old,
So was his sleeve embroidered;
A plumed hat had he on his head,
And by his side a cutting sword
Fit for the girdle of a lord;
And round his neck a knife he bore,
Whose hilt was well enamelled o'er,
With green leaves on a golden ground,
Whose stem a silver scroll enwound;
Charged with those letters, writ in black,
Strike ! for no dead man cometh back.

The boy gazed at him earnestly,
With beating heart, as he drew nigh.
And when at last he drew his rein
Beside him, thought that not in vain
His dream might be. But Samuel
Below his breath said, "Surely well
Shalt thou fulfil thy destiny;
And, spite of all, thou wilt not die
Till thou hast won the arched crown."

But with that word he lighted down,
And said aloud, "Lad, tell to me
Where the good miller I may see,
For from the King I come to-day,
And have a word to him to say;
I think, indeed, concerning thee;
For surely thou his lad must be."

Then Michael leapt up, nor took heed
Of how the nibbling dace might feed

Upon the loose ends of his bait;
"Fair sir," he said, "my sire doth wait
Until men bring his mare from grass,
For to the good town will he pass,
Since he has need of household gear;
Follow, my lord, the place is here."
Withal, the good steed being made fast,
Unto the other side they passed,
And by the door the miller found,
Who bowed before him to the ground,
And asked what he would have him do—
Then from his bosom Samuel drew
A scroll, and said, "Good friend, read here,
And do my bidding without fear
Of doing ill."
"Sir," said the man,
"But little lettered skill I can;
Let my dame come, for she can read
Well-written letters at good need."
"Nay, friend," he said, "suffice it thee
This seal at the scroll's end to see,
My Lord the King's: and hear my word,
That I come hither from my lord
Thy foundling lad to have away
To serve the King from this same day."
Downcast the miller looked thereat,
And twisting round his dusty hat,
Said, "Well, my lord, so must it be,
Nor is he aught akin to me,
Nor seems so: none the less would I

Have left him, when I came to die,
All things I have, with this my mill,
Wherein he hath no 'prentice skill,
Young as he is: and surely here
Might he have lived, with little fear,
A life of plenty and of bliss—
Near by, too, a fair maid there is,
I looked should be good wife to him."

Meanwhile young Michael's head 'gan swim
With thoughts of noble life and praise;
And he forgat the happy days
Wherein the happy dreams he dreamed
That now so near fulfilment seemed;
And, looking through the open mill,
Stared at the grey and windy hill
And saw it not, but some fair place
Made strange with many a changing face,
And all his life that was to be.
But Samuel, laughing scornfully,
Said, "O good soul, thou thinkest then
This is a life for well-born men,
As our lord deems this youngling is—
Tell me, good lad, where lies thy bliss?"
But Michael turned shamefaced and red,
Waked from his dream, and stammering said,
"Fair sir, my life is sweet and good,
And John, the ranger of the wood,
Saith that I draw so good a bow,
That I shall have full skill enow

Ere many months have passed me by
To join the muster, and to try
To win the bag of florins white,
That folk, on Barnaby the bright,
Shoot for within the market town.
Sir, please you to look up and down
The weedy reaches of our stream,
And note the bubbles of the bream,
And see the great chub take the fly,
And watch the long pike basking lie
Outside the shadow of the weed.
Withal there come unto our need
Woodcock and snipe when swallows go;
And now the water-hen flies low
With feet that well-nigh touch the reeds,
And plovers cry about the meads,
And the stares chatter; certes, sir,
It is a fair place all the year."
Eyeing him grimly, Samuel said,
"Thou show'st churl's breeding, by my head,
In foul despite of thy fair face!
Take heart, for to a better place
Thou goest now.—Miller, farewell,
Nor need'st thou to the neighbours tell
The noble fortunes of the lad;
For, certes, he shall not be glad
To know them in a year or twain.

Barnaby the bright. St. Barnabas, whose name signifies "son of consolation," was noted for his cheerfulness and works of charity. St. Barnabas' Day is June 11.

Yet shall thy finding not be vain,
And thou mayst bless it; for behold
This bag wherein is store of gold;
Take it and let thy hinds go play,
And grind no corn for many a day,
For it would buy thy mill and thee."
He turned to go, but pensively
Stood Michael, for his broken dream
Doubtful and far away did seem
Amid the squire's rough mockeries;
And tears were gathering in his eyes.
But the kind miller's rough farewell
Rang in his ears; and Samuel
Stamped with his foot and plucked his sleeve;
So therewithal he turned to leave
His old abode, the quiet place,
Trembling, with wet and tearful face.
But even as he turned there came
From out the house the simple dame
And cast rough arms about the lad,
Saying, "For that I have been glad
By means of thee this many a day,
My mourning heart this hour doth pay.
But, fair son, may'st thou live in bliss,
And die in peace; remembering this,
When thou art come to high estate,
That in our house, early and late,
The happy house that shall be sad,
Thou hadst the best of all we had
And love unfeigned from us twain,

Whose hearts thou madest young again,
Hearts that the quicker old shall grow
Now thou art gone."
"Good dame, enow,"
Quoth Samuel, "the day grows late,
And sure the King for meat shall wait
Until he see this new-found lord."
He strode away upon that word;
And half ashamed, and half afeard,
Yet eager as his dream he neared,
Shyly the lad went after him.
They crossed the stream and by its brim
Both mounted the great warhorse grey,
And without word they rode away.

But as along the river's edge
They went, and brown birds in the sedge
Twittered their sweet and formless tune
In the fair autumn afternoon,
And reach by reach the well-known stream
They passed, again the hopeful dream
Of one too young to think death near,
Who scarce had learned the name of fear
Remorseful memories put to flight;
Lovely the whole world showed and bright.
Nor did the harsh voice rouse again
The thought of mockery or of pain,
For other thoughts held Samuel.
So, riding silently and well,
They reached at last the dusty road

That led unto the King's abode.
But Samuel turned away his face
Therefrom, and at a steady pace
The great horse thundered o'er the bridge,
And made on toward the heathy ridge,
Wherefrom they rode that other day.
But Michael, noting well the way,
Why thus they went, fell wondering,
And said aloud, "Dwells then the King,
Fair sir, as now within the wood?"
"Young fool, where that it seems him good
He dwelleth," quoth old Samuel,
"And now it pleaseth him to dwell
With the black monks across the wood."
Withal he muttered in his hood,
"Curst be the King, and thee also,
Who thrust me out such deeds to do,
When I should bide at home to pray,
Who draw so nigh my ending day."
So saying forth his horse he spurred
And to himself said yet this word,
"Yea, yea, and of all days forlorn
God curse the day when I was born."
Therewith he groaned; yet saying thus
His case seemed hard and piteous,
When he remembered how of old,
Another tale he might have told.
So as each thought his own thoughts still,
The horse began to breast the hill,
And still they went on higher ground,

Until as Michael turned him round
He saw the sunny country-side
Spread out before him far and wide,
Golden amidst its waning green,
Joyous with varied life unseen.
Meanwhile from side to side of them
The trees began their way to hem,
As still he gazed from tree to tree,
And when he turned back presently
He saw before him like a wall
Uncounted tree-trunks dim and tall.
Then with their melancholy sound
The odorous spruce-woods met around
Those wayfarers, and when he turned
Once more, far off the sunlight burned
In star-like spots, while from o'erhead,
Dim twilight through the boughs was shed.
Not there as yet had Michael been,
Nor had he left the meadows green
Dotted about with spreading trees,
And fresh with sun and rain and breeze,
For those mirk woods, and still his eyes
Gazed round about for mysteries.
Since many an old wife's tale he knew;
Huge woodcutters in raiment blue,
The remnant of a mighty race,
The ancient masters of the place,
And hammering trolls he looked to see,
And dancers of the faërie,
Who, as the ancient stories told,

In front were lovely to behold,
But empty shells seen from behind.

So on they rode until the wind
Had died out, stifled by the trees,
And Michael 'mid those images
Of strange things made alive by fear,
Grew drowsy in the forest drear;
Nor noted how the time went past
Until they nigh had reached at last
The borders of the spruce-tree wood;
And with a tingling of the blood
Samuel bethought him of the day
When turned about the other way
He carried him he rode with now.
For the firs ended on the brow
Of a rough gravelly hill, and there
Lay a small valley nowise fair
Beneath them, clear at first of all
But brake, till amid rushes tall
Down in the bottom alders grew
Crabbed and rough; and winding through
The clayey mounds a brook there was
Oozy and foul, half choked with grass.
There now the Squire awhile drew rein,
And noted how the ground again
Rose up upon the other side,
And saw a green glade opening wide
'Twixt oaks and hollies, and he knew
Full well what place it led unto;

Withal he heard the bittern's boom,
And though without the fir-wood's gloom
They now were come, yet red and low
The sun above the trees did show,
And in despite of hardihead,
The old squire had a mortal dread
Of lying in the wood alone
When that was done that should be done.
Now Michael, wakened by the wind,
Clutched tighter at the belt behind,
And with wide eyes was staring round,
When Samuel said, "Get to the ground,
My horse shall e'en sink deep enow,
Without thy body, in this slough;
And haste thee, or we both shall lie
Beneath the trees, and be as dry
As autumn dew can make us. Haste!
The time is short for thee to waste."
Then from the horse the boy did glide,
And slowly down the valley side
They went, and Michael, wakened now,
Sang such rude songs as he might know,
Grown fresh and joyous of his life;
While Samuel, clutching at the knife
About his neck that hung, again
Down in the bottom tightened rein,
And turning, in a hoarse voice said,
"My girths are loosening, by my head!
Come nigh and draw them tighter, lad."
Then Michael stayed his carol glad,

And noting little in his mirth
The other's voice, unto the girth
Without a word straight set his hand:
But as with bent head he did stand,
Straining to tighten what was tight,
In Samuel's hand the steel flashed bright,
And fell, deep smitten in his side,
Then, leaping back, the poor lad cried,
As if for help, and staggering fell,
With wide eyes fixed on Samuel;
Who none the less grown deadly pale,
Lit down, lest that should not avail
To slay him, and beside him knelt,
And since his eyes were closed now, felt
His heart that beat yet: therewithal
His hand upon the knife did fall.
But, ere his fingers clutched it well,
Far off he seemed to hear a bell,
And trembling knelt upright again,
And listening, listened not in vain,
For clear he heard a tinkling sound.
Then to his horse from off the ground
He leapt, nor reasoned with his dread,
But thought the angel of the dead
Was drawing nigh the slayer to slay,
Ere scarce the soul had passed away.
One dreadful moment yet he heard
That bell, then like a madman spurred
His noble horse; that maddened too,
The close-set fir-wood galloped through,

Not stayed by any stock or stone,
Until the furious race being done,
Anigh the bridge he fell down dead;
And Samuel, mazed with guilt and dread,
Wandered afoot throughout the night,
But came, at dawning of the light,
Half-dead unto the palace gate.

There till the opening did he wait;
Then, by the King's own signet-ring,
He gained the chamber of the King,
And painfully what he had done
He told, and how the thing had gone.
And said withal: "Yet is he dead,
And surely that which made my dread
Shall give thee joy: for doubt not aught
That bell the angels to him brought,
That he in Abraham's breast might lie—
So ends, O King, the prophecy."

Nathless the King scowled, ill content,
And said, "I deemed that I had sent
A man of war to do my will,
Who lacked for neither force nor skill,
And thou com'st with a woman's face,
Bewildered with thy desperate race,
And made an idiot with thy fear,
Nor bring'st me any token here!"

Therewith he rose and gat away,
But brooding on it through that day,
Thought that all things went not so ill
As first he deemed, and that he still

Might leave his old line flourishing.
Therewith both gold and many a thing
Unto old Samuel he gave,
But thereby failed his life to save;
Who, not so old in years as sin,
Died ere the winter, and within
The minster choir was laid asleep,
With carven saints his head to keep.

And so the days and years went by,
And still in great felicity
The King dwelt, wanting only this—
A son wherewith to share his bliss,
And reign when he was dead and gone.
Nor had he daughter, save that one
Born on the night when Michael first,
Forlorn, alone, and doubly cursed,
Felt on him this world's bitter air.
This daughter, midst fair maids most fair,
Was not yet wed, though at this time,
Being come unto her maiden's prime,
She looked upon her eighteenth May.
Midst this her mother passed away,
Not much lamented of the King,
Who had the thought of marrying
Some dame more fertile, and who sent
A wily man with this intent
To spy the countries out and find
Some great king's daughter, wise and kind,
And fresh, and fair, in face and limb,

In all things a fit mate for him.
So in short time it came to pass
Again the King well wedded was,
And hoped once more to have a son.
And when this fair dame he had won,
A year in peace he dwelt with her,
Until the time was drawing near
When first his eyes beheld that foe
He deemed was dead these years ago.
Now at that time, as custom was,
His daughter was about to pass
Unto a distant house of his,
Some king had built for worldly bliss
In ancient days: there, far removed
From courts or towns, the dame he loved
The dead king had been wont to see
Play mid the summer greenery,
Or like Erigone of old
Stand in the vineyards girt with gold,
To queen it o'er the vintagers,
Half worshipping that face of hers.
Long years agone these folk were passed,
Their crimes forgotten, or else cast
Into the glowing crucible
Of time, that tempers all things well,

Erigone. Daughter of Icarius, to whom Bacchus taught the cultivation of the vine. Her father was slain by some peasants who thought they had been poisoned when they became intoxicated by some of his wine. Erigone, guided by his faithful dog Mœra, found his grave, and hanged herself on a neighbouring tree.

That maketh pleasure out of pain,
And out of ruin golden gain;
Nathless, unshaken still, there stood
The towers and ramparts red as blood;
Wherein their lives had passed away;
And still the lovely gardens lay
About them, changed, but smiling still,
As in past time, on good or ill.
Thither the Princess Cecily
Must go awhile in peace to be;
For now, midst care, and doubt, and toil,
Proud words drawn back, and half-healed broil,
The King had found one meet to wed
His daughter, of great goodlihead,
Wealth, and unbroken royalty.
And now he said to her, when she
Was setting out for that fair place,
"O daughter, thou shalt see my face
Before a month is fully gone,
Nor wilt thou see me then alone;
For that man shall be with me then
Whom I have chosen from all men
To give my dearest treasure to.
Most fain he is to look on you,
Nor needst thou fear him for thy part,
Who holdeth many a woman's heart
As the net holds the silvery fish.
Farewell—and all things thou mayst wish
I pray God grant thee."
Therewithal

He kissed her, and from out the hall
She passed, not shamefaced, or afraid
Of what might happen; though, indeed,
Her heart of no man's heart had need
To make her happy as she thought.

Ever the new sun daily brought
Fresh joy of life to her bedside,
The world before her open wide
Was spread, a place for joy and bliss.
Her lips had trembled with no kiss,
Wherewith love slayeth fear and shame;
Her grey eyes conscious of no blame,
Beheld unmoved the eyes of men;
Her hearing grew no dimmer when
Some unused footstep she might hear;
And unto no man was she dear,
But as some goddess might have been
When Greek men worshipped many a queen.

Now with her armed folk forth she rode
Unto that ancient fair abode,
And while the lark sung o'er the corn,
Love gilded not the waning morn;
And when the sun rose high above,
High thoughts she thought, but not of love;
And when that sun the world did leave,
He left no love to light the eve.
The moon no melancholy brought,
The dawn no vain, remorseful thought.

But all untroubled her sweet face
Passed 'neath the gate of that old place,
And there her bridegroom she abode.

But scarce was she upon the road
Ere news unto the King was brought
That Peter, the old Abbot, sought
To see him, having newly come
From the wild place that was his home
Across the forest; so the King
Bade him to enter, well willing
To hear what he might have to say;
Who, entering the hall straightway,
Had with him an old, reverend man,
The Sub-prior, Father Adrian,
And five monks more, and therewithal
Ten of his folk, stout men and tall,
Who bore armed staves and coats of fence.
So, when he came to audience,
He prayed the King of this or that,
Whereof my tale-teller forgat,
And graciously the King heard all,
And said at last, "Well, what may fall,
Thou go'st not hence, fair lord, to-day;
Unless in vain a king must pray,
Thou and thy monks shall eat with me;
While feast thine axe-men merrily."
Withal, he eyed the Abbot's folk
In careless mood, then once more spoke,
'Tall men thou feedest, by the rood!

Lord Abbot, come they from the wood?
Dwell many more such thereabout?
Fain were I such should swell the shout
When I am armed, and rank meets rank."
But as he spoke his loud voice sank
Wavering, nor heard he aught at all
Of the faint noises of the hall,
Or what the monk in answer said;
For, looking from a steel-clad head,
Those eyes again did he behold,
That erst from 'neath the locks of gold
Kindly and bold, but soft with awe,
Beneath the apple-boughs he saw.
But when for sure this thing he knew
Pale to the very lips he grew.
Till gathering heart within a while
With the faint semblance of a smile,
He seemed to note the Abbot's words
That he heard not; then from the lords
He turned, and facing Michael said,
"Raise up the steel cap from thine head,
That I may see if thou look'st bold;
Methinks, I know thy face of old,
Whence com'st thou?"
Michael lifted straight
From off his brow the steel cap's weight,
And showed the bright locks curling round
His fresh and ruddy face, sun-browned,
And in a voice clear as a bell
Told all his story, till he fell

Sore wounded in that dismal vale,
And said withal, "My lord, the tale
Of what came after, none knoweth
Better than he, who, from ill death
Saved me that tide, and made me man,
My lord, the Sub-prior Adrian."
"Speak on then, father," quoth the King,
Making as he was still hearkening.
"My lord," said Adrian, "I, who then
Was but a server of poor men,
Outside our Abbey walls, one day
Was called by one in poor array,
A charcoal-burner's lad, who said
That soon his father would be dead,
And that of all things he would have
His rights, that he his soul might save.
I made no tarrying at that word,
But took between mine hands the Lord,
And bade the boy bear forth the bell;
For though few folk there were to tell
Who passed that way, nathless, I trow
The beasts were glad that news to know.
"Well, by the pinewood's skirts we went
While through its twilight the bell sent
A heavenly tinkling; but the lad
'Gan telling me of fears he had
Of elves who dwell within the wood.
I chid him thereat, as was good,
Bidding him note Whom in mine hands
I held, The Ransom of all Lands.

But as the firwood's dim twilight
Waxed into day, and fair and bright
The evening sun showed through the trees,
Our ears fanned by the evening breeze,
The galloping of horse-hoofs heard,
Wherewith my page hung back afeard
Of elves and such-like; but I said,
'Wilt thou thy father should be dead
Ere we can reach him? Oh, my son,
Fear not that aught can stay This One.'
"Therewith I smote my mule, and he
Ran forward with me hastily
As fearing to be left behind.
Well, as we went, what should we find
Down by the stream but this my son,
Who seemed as though his days were done;
For in his side a knife there stood
Wherefrom ran out a stream of blood,
Soaking the grass and water-mint;
Then, I dismounting, we by dint
Of all our strength, the poor youth laid
Upon my mule, and down a glade
Of oaks and hollies then we passed,
And reached the woodman's home at last;
A poor hut, built of wattled wood,
And by its crooked gable stood
A ruinous shed, unroofed and old,
That beasts of burden once did hold.
—Thyself, my lord, mayst know it well,
Since thereabout the wild swine dwell;

And hart, and hind, and roe are there—
So the lad's wounds I staunched with care
Forthwith, and then the man I shrived,
Who none the less got well and lived
For many a day: then back I went
And the next day our leech I sent
With drugs to tend upon the lad.
Who soon was as he ne'er had had
A hurt at all: and he being well
We took him in our house to dwell,
And taught him letters, and, indeed,
Before long, Latin could he read
As well as I; but hath no will
To turn unto religion still.
Yet is he good and doth no wrong;
And being thereto both hale and strong,
My lord, the Abbot, sayeth of him,
'He shall serve God with heart and limb,
Not heart and voice.' Therefore, my lord,
Thou seest him armed with spear and sword
For their defence who feed him still,
Teach him, and guard his soul from ill.
Ho, Michael! hast thou there with thee
The fair-wrought knife I first did see
Deep in thy side?—there, show it now
Unto the King, that he may know
Our tale is not a fabled thing."
Withal the King, as one listening,
With his thin, anxious face and pale,
Sat leaning forward through this tale,

Scarce noting here and there a word.
But all being told, at last he heard
His own voice changed, and harsh, and low,
That said, "Fair lord. I fain would know,
Since this your man-at-arms seems true,
What thing will he be worth to you;
For better had he wear my rose
Than loiter in your Abbey-close,
Poring o'er books no man can read."
"O sire!" the monk said, "if your need
Be great of such men, let him go;
My men-at-arms need make no show
Of fairness, nor should ladies miss,
E'en as thou say'st, such men as this."
Laughing he spoke; the King the while
His pale face puckering to a smile;
Then, as in some confused dream,
In Michael's hand he saw the gleam
Of that same steel remembered well,
The gift he gave to Samuel;
Drawn from his father's ancient chest
To do that morn his own behest.
And as he now beheld its sheen,
The twining stem of gold and green,
The white scroll with the letters black,—
Strike ! for no dead man cometh back !
He hardened yet his heart once more,
And grown unhappy as before,
When last he had that face in sight,
Brought now the third time to the light,

Once more was treacherous, fierce, and fell.
Now was the Abbot feasted well
With all his folk, then went away,
But Michael clad in rich array
Became the King's man, and was thought
By all most happy to be brought
Unto such hopeful fair estate.

For ten days yet the King did wait,
Which past, for Michael did he send,
And he being come, said to him, "Friend,
Take now this letter from my hand
And go unto our southern land;
My captain Hugh shall go with thee
For one day's journey, then shall he
Tell thee which way thou hast to ride;
The third day thence about noontide
If thou dost well, thou shouldst be close
Unto my Castle of the Rose
Where dwells my daughter; needs it is
That no man living should see this
Until that thou within my wall
Hast given it to the Seneschal;
Be wise and wary then, that thou
Mayst think of this that happeneth now
As birthday to thine high estate."
So said he, knowing not that fate
Was dealing otherwise than he.
But Michael going, presently
Met Hugh, a big man rough and black,

And who of nought but words had lack,
With him he mounted, and set forth
And daylong rode on from the north.
Now if the King had hope that Hugh
Some deed like Samuel's might do
I know not, certes nought he said
To that hard heart and narrow head,
Who knew no wiles but wiles of war,
And was as true as such men are;
Yet had there been a tale to tell
If Michael had not held him well,
And backward still the wrath had turned
Wherewith his heart not seldom burned
At scornful words his fellow said.
At last they reached cross ways that led
One west, one southward still, whereat
Hugh, taking off his feathered hat,
Bowed low in scorn, and said, "Fair sir,
Unto the westward must I spur,
While you go southward, soon to get,
I doubt not, an earl's coronet;
Farewell, my lord, and yet beware
Thou dost not at my lady stare
Too hard, lest thou shouldst plumb the moat,
Or have a halter round thy throat."
But Michael to his scoff said nought,
But upon high things set his thought
As his departing hooves he heard.
And still betwixt the hedgerows spurred,
And when the twilight was o'erpast

At a small inn drew rein at last,
And slept that night as such folk can;
And while next morn the thrushes ran
Their first course through the autumn dew
The gossamers did he dash through,
And on his way rode steadily
The live-long day, nor yet was he
Alone, as well might be that day,
Since a fair town was in his way,
Stout hinds he passed, and yeomen good,
Some friar in his heavy hood,
And white-coifed housewives mounted high
Above their maunds, while merrily
The well-shod damsel trudged along
Beside them, sending forth a song
As little taught as is a bird's;
And good men, good wives, priests, and herds,
And merry maids failed not to send
Good wishes for his journey's end
Unto him as still on he sped,
Free from all evil thoughts or dread.

Withal again the day went by,
And in that city's hostelry
He slept, and by the dawn of day
Next morn again was on his way,
And leaving the scarce wakened street
The newly risen sun did greet
With cheerful heart. His way wound on

Maunds. Market baskets.

Still up and up till he had won
Up to a great hill's chalky brow,
Whence looking back he saw below
The town spread out, church, square, and street,
And baily, crawling up the feet
Of the long yew-besprinkled hill;
And in the fragrant air and still,
Seeming to gain new life from it,
The doves from roof to roof did flit:
The early fires sent up their smoke
That seemed to him to tell of folk
New wakened unto great delight:
For he upon that morning bright,
So joyous felt, so free from pain,
He seemed as he were born again
Into some new immortal state
That knew no envy, fear, or hate.

Now the road turned to his left hand
And led him through a table-land,
Windy and barren of all grain;
But where a hollow specked the plain
The yew-trees hugged the sides of it,
And mid them did the woodlark flit
Or sang well sheltered from the wind,
And all about the sheep did find
Sweet grass, the while the shepherd's song
Rang clear as Michael sped along.

Long time he rode, till suddenly,
When now the sun was broad and high,
From out a hollow where the yew

Still guarded patches of the dew,
He found at last that he had won
That highland's edge, and gazed upon
A valley that beneath the haze
Of that most fair of autumn days,
Showed glorious; fair with golden sheaves,
Rich with the darkened autumn-leaves,
Gay with the water-meadows green,
The bright blue streams that lay between,
The miles of beauty stretched away
From that bleak hill-side bare and grey,
Till white cliffs over slopes of vine,
Drew 'gainst the sky a broken line.
And 'twixt the vineyards and the stream
Michael saw gilded spirelets gleam;
For, hedged with many a flowery close,
There lay the Castle of the Rose,
His hurried journey's aim and end.

Then downward he began to wend,
And 'twixt the flowery hedges sweet
He heard the hook smite down the wheat,
And murmur of the unseen folk;
But when he reached the stream that broke
The golden plain, but leisurely
He passed the bridge, for he could see
The masters of that ripening realm,
Cast down beneath an ancient elm
Upon a little strip of grass,
From hand to hand the pitcher pass,

While on the turf beside them lay
The ashen-handled sickles grey,
The matters of their cheer between:
Slices of white cheese, specked with green,
And green-striped onions and ryebread,
And summer apples faintly red,
Even beneath the crimson skin;
And yellow grapes, well ripe and thin,
Plucked from the cottage gable-end.

And certes Michael felt their friend
Hearing their voices, nor forgot
His boyhood and the pleasant spot
Beside the well-remembered stream;
And friendly did this water seem
As through its white-flowered weeds it ran
Bearing good things to beast and man.
Yea, as the parapet he passed,
And they a greeting toward him cast,
Once more he felt a boy again;
As though beneath the harvest wain
He was asleep, by that old stream,
And all these things were but a dream—
The King, the Squire, the hurrying ride
Unto the lonely quagmire side;
The sudden pain, the deadly swoon,
The feverish life from noon to noon;
The tending of the kind old man,
The black and white Dominican,
The hour before the Abbot's throne,

The poring o'er old books alone,
In summer morn; the King again,
The envious greetings of strange men,
This mighty horse and rich array,
This journey on an unknown way.
Surely he thought to wake from it,
And once more by the waggon sit,
Blinking upon the sunny mill.
But not for either good or ill
Shall he see one of all those days;
On through the quivering noontide haze
He rode, and now on either hand
Heavy with fruit the trees did stand;
Nor had he ridden long, ere he
The red towers of the house could see
Grey on the wind-beat southern side:
And soon the gates thrown open wide
He saw, the long-fixed drawbridge down,
The moat, with lilies overgrown,
Midst which the gold-scaled fishes lay:
Such peace was there for many a day.
And deep within the archway's shade
The warder on his cloak was laid,
Dozing, one hand upon a harp.
And nigh him a great golden carp
Lay stiff with all his troubles done,
Drawn from the moat ere yet the sun
Was high, and nigh him was his bane,
An angling rod of Indian cane.
Now hearing Michael's horse-hooves smite

The causeway, shading from the light
His eyes, as one scarce yet awake,
He made a shift his spear to take,
And, eyeing Michael's badge the while,
Rose up, and with a lazy smile,
Said, "Ho! fair sir, abide, abide,
And show why hitherward ye ride
Unto my lady's royal home."
Said Michael, "From the King I come,
As by my badge ye well may see;
And letters have I here with me
To give my lord the Seneschal."
"Yea," said the man, "but in the hall
He feasteth now; what haste is there,
Certes full quickly cometh care;
And sure I am he will not read
Thy letters, or to aught give heed
Till he has played out all the play,
And every guest has gone away;
So thou, O damoiseau, must wait;
Tie up thine horse anigh the gate,
And sit with me, and thou shalt hear
The Kaiser lieth on his bier.
Thou laughest—hast thou never heard
Of this same valorous Red Beard,
And how he died? Well, I can sing
Of many another dainty thing,
Thou wilt not a long while forget,
The budget is not empty yet.
—Peter! I think thou mockest me,

But thou art young and fair perdie,
I wish thee luck—well, thou mayest go
And feel the afternoon wind blow
Within Dame Bertha's pleasance here;
She who was held so lief and dear,
All this was built but for her sake,
Who made the hearts of men to ache;
And dying full of years and shame
Yet left an unforgotten name—
God rest her soul!"

Michael the while
Hearkened his talking with a smile,
Then said, "O friend, I think to hear
Both *The King lieth on his bier*
And many another song of thee,
Ere I depart; but now show me
The pleasance of the ancient queen,
For these red towers above the green
Show like the gates of Paradise,
That surely somewhere through them lies."

Then said the warder, "That may be
If thou know'st what may come to thee—
When past the drawbridge thou hast gone,
Upon the left three steps of stone
Lead to a path beneath the wall
Of the great court, that folk now call
The falconer's path, nor canst thou miss
Going thereby to find the bliss
Thou look'st for, since the path ends there,
And through a wicket gilded fair

The garden lies where thou wouldst be:
Nor will I fail to come to thee
Whene'er my lord the Seneschal
Shall pass well fed from out the hall."
Then Michael, thanking him, passed on,
And soon the gilded wicket won,
And entered that pleasance sweet,
And wandered there with wary feet
And open mouth, as though he deemed
That in some lovely dream he dreamed,
And feared to wake to common day,
So fair was all; and e'en decay
Brought there but pensive loveliness,
Where autumn those old walls did bless
With wealth of fruit, and through the grass
Unscared the spring-born thrush did pass,
Who yet knew nought of winter-tide.
So wandering, to a fountain's side
He came, and o'er the basin hung,
Watching the fishes, as he sung
Some song remembered from of old,
Ere yet the miller won that gold.
But soon made drowsy with his ride,
And the warm hazy autumn-tide,
And many a musical sweet sound,
He cast him down upon the ground,
And watched the glittering water leap,
Still singing low, nor thought to sleep.
But scarce three minutes had gone by
Before, as if in mockery,

The starling chattered o'er his head,
And nothing he remembered,
Nor dreamed of aught that he had seen.

Meanwhile unto that garden green
Had come the Princess, and with her
A maiden that she held right dear,
Who knew the inmost of her mind.
Now those twain, as the scented wind
Played with their raiment or their hair,
Had late been running here and there,
Chasing each other merrily,
As maids do, thinking no one by;
But now, well wearied therewithal,
Had let their gathered garments fall
About their feet, and slowly went:
And through the leaves a murmur sent,
As of two happy doves that sing
The soft returning of the spring.
Now of these twain the Princess spoke
The less, but into laughter broke
Not seldom, and would redden oft,
As on her lips her fingers soft
She laid, as still the other maid,
Half grave, half smiling, follies said.
So in their walk they drew anigh
That fountain in the midst, whereby
Lay Michael sleeping, dreaming nought
Of such fair things so nigh him brought;
They, when the fountain shaft was past,

Beheld him on the ground down-cast,
And stopped at first, until the maid
Stepped lightly forward to the shade,
And when she had gazed there awhile
Came running back again, a smile
Parting her lips, and her bright eyes
Afire with many fantasies;
And ere the Lady Cecily
Could speak a word, "Hush! hush!" said she;
"Did I not say that he would come
To woo thee in thy peaceful home
Before thy father brought him here?
Come, and behold him, have no fear!
The great bell would not wake him now,
Right in his ears."
"Nay, what dost thou?"
The Princess said: "Let us go hence;
Thou know'st I give obedience
To what my father bids; but I
A maid full fain would live and die,
Since I am born to be a queen."
"Yea, yea, for such as thou hast seen,
That may be well," the other said.
"But come now, come; for by my head
This one must be from Paradise;
Come swiftly then, if thou art wise,
Ere aught can snatch him back again."
She caught her hand, and not in vain
She prayed; for now some kindly thought
To Cecily's brow fair colour brought,

And quickly 'gan her heart to beat
As Love drew near those eyes to greet,
Who knew him not till that sweet hour.

So over the fair, pink-edged flower
Softly she stepped; but when she came
Anigh the sleeper, lovely shame
Cast a soft mist before her eyes
Full filled of many fantasies.
But when she saw him lying there
She smiled to see her mate so fair;
And in her heart did Love begin
To tell his tale, nor thought she sin
To gaze on him that was her own,
Not doubting he was come alone
To woo her, whom midst arms and gold
She deemed she should at first behold;
And with that thought love grew again
Until departing was a pain,
Though fear grew with that growing love,
And with her lingering footsteps strove
As from the place she turned to go,
Sighing and murmuring words full low.
But as her raiment's hem she raised,
And for her merry fellow gazed
Shamefaced and changed, she met her eyes
Turned grave and sad with ill surprise;
Who while the Princess mazed did stand
Had drawn from Michael's loosened band
The King's scroll, which she held out now

To Cecily, and whispered low,
"Read, and do quickly what thou wilt,
Sad, sad! such fair life to be spilt:
Come further first."
With that they stepped
A pace or two from where he slept,
And then she read,
"*Lord Seneschal,*
On thee and thine may all good fall;
Greeting hereby the King sendeth,
And biddeth thee to put to death
His enemy who beareth this;
And as thou lovest life and bliss,
And all thy goods thou holdest dear,
Set thou his head upon a spear
A good half furlong from the gate,
Our coming hitherward to wait—
So perish the King's enemies!"
She read, and scarcely had her eyes
Seen clear her father's name and seal,
Ere all love's power her heart did feel,
That drew her back in spite of shame,
To him who was not e'en a name
Unto her a short hour agone.
Panting she said, "Wait thou alone
Beside him, watch him carefully
And let him sleep if none draw nigh.
If of himself he waketh, then
Hide him until I come again,
When thou hast told him of the snare—

If thou betrayest me beware!
For death shall be the least of all
The ills that on thine head shall fall—
What say I, thou art dear to me,
And doubly dear now shalt thou be,
Thou shalt have power and majesty,
And be more queen in all than I—
Few words are best, be wise, be wise!"

Withal she turned about her eyes
Once more, and swiftly as a man
Betwixt the garden trees she ran,
Until, her own bower reached at last,
She made good haste, and quickly passed
Unto her secret treasury.
There, hurrying since the time was nigh
For folk to come from meat, she took
From 'twixt the leaves of a great book
A royal scroll, signed, sealed, but blank,
Then, with a hand that never shrank
Or trembled, she the scroll did fill
With these words, writ with clerkly skill,—
"Unto the Seneschal, Sir Rafe,
Who holdeth our fair castle safe,
Greeting and health! O well-beloved,
Know that at this time we are moved
To wed our daughter, so we send
Him who bears this, our perfect friend,
To be her bridegroom; so do thou
Ask nought of him, since well we know

His race and great nobility,
And how he is most fit to be
Our son ; therefore make no delay,
But wed the twain upon the day
Thou readest this : and see that all
Take oath to him, whate'er shall fall
To do his bidding as our heir ;
So doing still be lief and dear
As I have held thee yet to be."

She cast the pen down hastily
At that last letter, for she heard
How even now the people stirred
Within the hall: nor dared she think
What bitter potion she must drink
If now she failed, so falsely bold
That life or death did she enfold
Within its cover, making shift
To seal it with her father's gift,
A signet of cornelian.

Then swiftly down the stairs she ran
And reached the garden; but her fears
Brought shouts and thunder to her ears,
That were but lazy words of men
Full-fed, far off; nay, even when
Her limbs caught up her flying gown
The noise seemed loud enough to drown
The twitter of the autumn birds,
And her own muttered breathless words
That to her heart seemed loud indeed.

Yet therewithal she made good speed
And reached the fountain seen of none
Where yet abode her friend alone,
Watching the sleeper, who just now
Turned in his sleep and muttered low.
Therewith fair Agnes saying nought
From out her hand the letter caught;
And while she leaned against the stone
Stole up to Michael's side alone,
And with a cool, unshrinking hand
Thrust the new scroll deep in his band,
And turned about unto her friend;
Who having come unto the end
Of all her courage, trembled there
With face upturned for fresher air,
And parted lips grown grey and pale,
And limbs that now began to fail,
And hands wherefrom all strength had gone,
Scarce fresher than the blue-veined stone
That quivering still she strove to clutch.
But when she felt her lady's touch,
Feebly she said, "Go! let me die
And end this sudden misery
That in such wise has wrapped my life,
I am too weak for such a strife,
So sick I am with shame and fear;
Would thou hadst never brought me here!"
But Agnes took her hand and said,
"Nay, queen, and must we three be dead
Because thou fearest? all is safe

If boldly thou wilt face Sir Rafe."
So saying, did she draw her hence,
Past tree and bower, and high pleached fence
Unto the garden's further end,
And left her there and back did wend,
And from the house made haste to get
A gilded maund wherein she set
A flask of ancient island wine,
Ripe fruits and wheaten manchets fine,
And many such a delicate
As goddesses in old time ate,
Ere Helen was a Trojan queen;
So passing through the garden green
She cast her eager eyes again
Upon the spot where he had lain,
But found it empty, so sped on
Till she at last the place had won
Where Cecily lay weak and white
Within that fair bower of delight.
Her straight she made to eat and drink,
And said, "See now thou dost not shrink
From this thy deed; let love slay fear
Now, when thy life shall grow so dear,
Each minute should seem loss to thee
If thou for thy felicity
Couldst stay to count them; for I say,
This day shall be thy happy day."
Therewith she smiled to see the wine
Embraced by her fingers fine;
And her sweet face grow bright again

With sudden pleasure after pain.
Again she spoke, "What is this word
That dreaming, I perchance, have heard,
But certainly remember well;
That some old soothsayer did tell
Strange things unto my lord, the King,
That on thy hand the spousal ring
No Kaiser's son, no King should set,
But one a peasant did beget—
What sayst thou?"
But the Queen flushed red;
"Such fables I have heard," she said;
"And thou—is it such scathe to me,
The bride of such a man to be?"
"Nay," said she, "God will have him King;
How shall we do a better thing
With this or that one than He can;
God's friend must be a goodly man."
But with that word she heard the sound
Of folk who through the mazes wound
Bearing the message; then she said,
"Be strong, pluck up thine hardihead,
Speak little, so shall all be well,
For now our own tale will they tell."

And even as she spoke they came
And all the green place was aflame
With golden raiment of the lords;
While Cecily, noting not their words,
Rose up to go; and for her part

By this had fate so steeled her heart,
Scarce otherwise she seemed than when
She passed before the eyes of men
At Tourney or high festival.
But when they now had reached the hall,
And up its very steps they went,
Her head a little down she bent;
Nor raised it till the daïs was gained
For fear that love some monster feigned
To be a god, and she should be
Smit by her own bolt wretchedly.
But at the rustling, crowded daïs
She gathered heart her eyes to raise,
And there beheld her love, indeed,
Clad in her father's serving weed,
But proud, and flushed, and calm withal,
Fearless of aught that might befal,
Nor too astonied, for he thought,—
"From point to point my life is brought
Through wonders till it comes to this;
And trouble cometh after bliss,
And I will bear all as I may,
And ever as day passeth day,
My life will hammer from the twain,
Forging a long enduring chain."
But midst these thoughts their young eyes met,
And every word did he forget
Wherewith men name unhappiness
As read again those words did bless
With double blessings his glad ears.

And if she trembled with her fears,
And if with doubt, and love, and shame,
The rosy colour went and came
In her sweet cheeks and smooth bright brow,
Little did folk think of it now,
But as of maiden modesty,
Shamefaced to see the bridegroom nigh.
And now when Rafe the Seneschal
Had read the message down the Hall,
And turned to her, quite calm again,
Her face had grown, and with no pain
She raised her serious eyes to his
Grown soft and pensive with his bliss,
And said,
"Prince, thou art welcome here,
Where all my father loves is dear,
And full trust do I put in thee,
For that so great nobility
He knoweth in thee; be as kind
As I would be to thee, and find
A happy life from day to day,
Till all our days are passed away."
What more than found the bystanders
He found within this speech of hers,
I know not; some faint quivering
In the last words; some little thing
That checked the cold words' even flow.
But yet they set his heart aglow,
And he in turn said eagerly:—
"Surely I count it nought to die

For him who brought me unto this;
For thee, who givest me this bliss;
Yea, even dost me such a grace
To look with kind eyes in my face,
And send sweet music to my ears."
But at his words she, mazed with tears,
Seemed faint, and failing quickly, when
Above the low hum of the men
Uprose the sweet bells' sudden clang,
As men unto the chapel rang;
While just outside the singing folk
Into most heavenly carols broke.
And going softly up the hall
Boys bore aloft the verges tall
Before the Bishop's gold-clad head.
Then forth his bride young Michael led,
And nought to him seemed good or bad
Except the lovely hand he had;
But she the while was murmuring low,
"If he could know, if he could know,
What love, what love, his love should be!"

But while mid mirth and minstrelsy
The ancient Castle of the Rose
Such pageant to the autumn shows
The King sits ill at ease at home,
For in these days the news is come
That he who in his line should wed,
Lies in his own town stark and dead,

Verges. Wands or rods carried as emblems of office.

Slain in a tumult in the street.
Brooding on this he deemed it meet,
Since nigh the day was come when she
Her bridegroom's visage looked to see,
To hold the settled day with her,
And bid her at the least to wear
Dull mourning guise for gold and white.
So on another morning bright,
When the whole promised month was past,
He drew anigh the place at last
Where Michael's dead head, looking down
Upon the highway with a frown,
He doubted not at last to see.
So 'twixt the fruitful greenery
He rode, scarce touched by care the while,
Humming a roundel with a smile.
Withal, ere yet he drew anigh,
He heard their watch-horn sound from high,
Nor wondered, for their wont was so,
And well his banner they might know
Amidst the stubble lands afar:
But now a distant point of war
He seemed to hear, and bade draw rein,
But listening cried, "Push on again!
They do but send forth minstrelsy
Because my daughter thinks to see
The man who lieth on his bier."
So on they passed, till sharp and clear
They heard the pipe and shrill fife sound;
And restlessly the King glanced round

To see that he had striven for,
The crushing of that Sage's lore,
The last confusion of that fate.
  But drawn still nigher to the gate
They turned a sharp bend of the road,
And saw the pageant that abode
The solemn coming of the King.

  For first on each side maids did sing,
Dressed in gold raiment; then there came
The minstrels in their coats of flame;
And then the many-coloured lords,
The knights' spears, and the swordmen's swords,
Backed by the glittering wood of bills.
  So now, presaging many ills,
The King drew rein, yet none the less
He shrank not from his hardiness,
But thought, "Well, at the worst I die,
And yet perchance long life may lie
Before me—I will hold my peace;
The dumb man's borders still increase."
  But as he strengthened thus his heart
He saw the crowd before him part,
And down the long melodious lane,
Hand locked in hand there passed the twain,
As fair as any earth has found,
Clad as kings' children are, and crowned.
Behind them went the chiefest lords,
And two old knights with sheathèd swords
The banners of the kingdom bore.

But now the King had pondered sore,
By when they reached him, though, indeed,
The time was short unto his need,
Betwixt his heart's first startled pang
And those old banner-bearers' clang
Anigh his saddle-bow: but he
Across their heads scowled heavily,
Not saying aught awhile: at last,
Ere any glance at them he cast,
He said, "Whence come ye? what are ye?
What play is this ye play to me?"
None answered,—Cecily, faint and white,
The rather Michael's hand clutched tight,
And seemed to speak, but not one word
The nearest to her could have heard.
Then the King spoke again,—"Sir Rafe,
Meseems this youngling came here safe
A week agone?"
"Yea, sir," he said;
"Therefore the twain I straight did wed,
E'en as thy letters bound me to."
"And thus thou diddest well to do,"
The King said. "Tell me on what day
Her old life she did put away."
"Sire, the eleventh day this is
Since that they gained their earthly bliss,"
Quoth old Sir Rafe. The King said nought,
But with his head bowed down in thought,
Stood a long while; but at the last
Upward a smiling face he cast,

And cried aloud above the folk,
"Shout for the joining of the yoke
Betwixt these twain! And thou, fair lord,
Who dost so well my every word,
Nor makest doubt of anything,
Wear thou the collar of thy King;
And a duke's banner, cut foursquare,
Henceforth shall men before thee bear
In Tourney and in stricken field.
"But this mine heir shall bear my shield,
Carry my banner, wear my crown,
Ride equal with me through my town,
Sit on the same step of the throne;
In nothing will I reign alone;
Nor be ye with him miscontent,
For that with little ornament
Of gold and folk to you he came;
For he is of an ancient name
That needeth not the clink of gold—
The ancientest the world doth hold;
For in the fertile Asian land,
Where great Damascus now doth stand,
Ages agone his line was born.
Ere yet men knew the gift of corn;
And there, anigh to Paradise,
His ancestors grew stout and wise;
And certes he from Asia bore
No little of their piercing lore.
"Look then to have great happiness,
For every wrong shall he redress."

Then did the people's shouting drown
His clatter as he leapt adown;
And taking in each hand a hand
Of the two lovers, now did stand
Betwixt them on the flower-strewn way,
And to himself meanwhile 'gan say,—

"How many an hour might I have been
Right merry in the gardens green;
How many a glorious day had I
Made happy with some victory;
What noble deeds I might have done,
What bright renown my deeds have won;
What blessings would have made me glad;
What little burdens had I had;
What calmness in the hope of praise;
What joy of well-accomplished days,
If I had let these things alone;
Nor sought to sit upon my throne
Like God between the cherubim.
But now—but now, my days wax dim,
And all this fairness have I tost
Unto the winds, for nought! yet will I strive
My little end of life to live;
Nor will I look behind me more,
Nor forward to the doubtful shore."

With that he made the sign to turn,
And straight the autumn air did burn
With many a point of steel and gold;

And through the trees the carol rolled
Once more, until the autumn thrush
Far off 'gan twittering on his bush,
Made mindful of the long-lived spring.
So mid sweet song and tabouring,
And shouts amid the apple-grove,
And soft caressing of his love,
Began the new King Michael's reign.
Nor will the poor folk see again
A king like him on any throne,
Or such good deeds to all men done:
For then, as saith the chronicle,
It was the time, as all men tell,
When scarce a man would stop to gaze
At gold crowns hung above the ways.

He ended; and midst those who heard were some
Who, midst his tale, half dreamed they were at home,
Round the great fire upon the winter night;
And, with the memory of the fresh delight
Wherewith they first had heard that story told,
Forgetting not they were grown weak and old,
Yet felt as if they had at least grown grey
Within the land left for so many a day.
He, with the gestures they were wont to see,
So told his tale, so strange with eld was he,
Just so he stammered, and in just such wise
He sighed, beginning fresh, as their young eyes,
Their ears, in happy days passed long ago,
Had ever noted other old men do,
When they, full filled with their quick-coming joys,
Would gaze on old folk as on carven toys.

But he being silent, silently awhile
They mused on these things, masking with a smile
The vain regrets that in their hearts arose,
The while with eager talk the young folk chose
The parts that pleased them; but their elder hosts
Falling to talk, yet noted well the ghosts
Of old desires within their wasted eyes
Till one by one the fresh-stirred memories,

So bitter-sweet, flickered and died away;
And as old men may do, whose hopes grew grey
Before their beards, they made a little mirth
Until the great moon rose upon the earth.[1]

[1] Then follows the story of *The Doom of King Acrisius.*

APRIL

When April-tide was melting into May,
Within a hall that midst the gardens lay
These elders met, and having feasted well,
The time came round the wonted tale to tell.
Then spake a Wanderer: "Sirs, it happed to me,
Long years agone, to cross the narrow sea
That 'twixt us Drontheimers and England lies;
Young was I then, and little thought these eyes
Should see so many lands ere all was done.
"But this land was a fair and fertile one,
As at that time, for April-tide it was,
Even as now; well, sirs, it came to pass
That to this town or that we took our way,
Or in some abbey's guesten-chamber lay,
And many tales we heard, some false, some true,
Of the ill deeds our fathers used to do
Within that land; and still the tale would end,
'Yet did the Saint his Holy House defend';
Or, 'Sirs, their fury all was nought and vain,
And by our Earl the pirate-king was slain.'
God wot, I laughed full often in my sleeve,
And could have told them stories, by their leave,
With other endings: but I held my tongue.
Let each king's deeds in his own land be sung,
And then will lies stretch far. Besides, these men
Were puffed up with their luck and glory then,

For at that tide, within the land of France,
Unto their piping must all people dance.—
—But let that pass, for Captain Rolf has told
How, on the way, their king he did behold.

"For other tales they told, and one of these
Not all the washing of the troublous seas,
Not all the changeful days whereof ye know,
Have swept from out my memory; even so
Small things far off will be remembered clear
When matters both more weighty, and more near,
Are waxing dim to us. I, who have seen
So many lands, and midst such marvels been,
Clearer than these abodes of outland men,
Can see above the green and unburnt fen
The little houses of an English town,
Cross-timbered, thatched with fen-reeds coarse and brown,
And high o'er these, three gables, great and fair,
That slender rods of columns do upbear
Over the minster doors, and imagery
Of kings, and flowers no summer field doth see,
Wrought on those gables.—Yea, I heard withal,
In the fresh morning air, the trowels fall
Upon the stone, a thin noise far away;
For high up wrought the masons on that day,
Since to the monks that house seemed scarcely well
Till they had set a spire or pinnacle
Each side the great porch. In that burgh I heard
This tale, and late have set down every word

That I remembered, when the thoughts would come
Of what we did in our deserted home,
And of the days, long past, when we were young,
Nor knew the cloudy woes that o'er us hung.
And howsoever I am now grown old,
Yet is it still the tale I then heard told
Within the guest-house of that minster-close,
Whose walls, like cliffs new-made, before us rose."

ARGUMENT

A certain king, blinded by pride, thought that he was something more than man, if not equal to God; but such a judgment fell on him that none knew him for king, and he suffered many things, till in the end, humbling himself, he regained his kingdom and honour.

In a far country that I cannot name,
And on a year long ages past away,
A King there dwelt, in rest and ease and fame,
And richer than the Emperor is to-day:
The very thought of what this man might say
From dusk to dawn kept many a lord awake,
For fear of him did many a great man quake.

Young was he when he first sat on the throne,
And he was wedded to a noble wife,
But at the daïs must he sit alone,
Nor durst a man speak to him for his life,
Except with leave: nought knew he change or strife,
But that the years passed silently away,
And in his black beard gathered specks of grey.

The Emperor. In mediæval times everyone would understand this to mean the head of the Holy Roman Empire who was supposed to be above all other rulers.

Now so it chanced, upon a May morning,
Wakeful he lay when yet low was the sun,
Looking distraught at many a royal thing,
And counting up his titles one by one,
And thinking much of things that he had done;
For full of life he felt, and hale and strong,
And knew that none durst say when he did wrong.

For no man now could give him dread or doubt,
The land was 'neath his sceptre far and wide,
And at his beck would well-armed myriads shout.
Then swelled his vain, unthinking heart with pride,
Until at last he raised him up and cried,
"What need have I for temple or for priest?
Am I not God, whiles that I live at least?"

And yet withal that dead his fathers were,
He needs must think that quick the years pass by;
But he, who seldom yet had seen Death near
Or heard his name, said, "Still I may not die
Though underneath the earth my fathers lie;
My sire indeed was called a mighty king,
Yet in regard of mine, a little thing

"His kingdom was; moreover his grandsire
To him was but a prince of narrow lands,
Whose father, though to things he did aspire
Beyond most men, a great knight of his hands,
Yet ruled some little town where now there stands
The kennel of my dogs; then may not I
Rise higher yet, nor like poor wretches die?

"Since up the ladder ever we have gone
Step after step nor fallen back again;
And there are tales of people who have won
A life enduring, without care or pain,
Or any man to make their wishes vain;
Perchance this prize unwitting now I hold;
For times change fast, the world is waxen old."

So mid these thoughts once more he fell asleep,
And when he woke again high was the sun,
Then quickly from his gold bed did he leap,
And of his former thoughts remembered none,
But said, "To-day through green woods will we run,
Nor shall to-day be worse than yesterday,
But better it may be, for game and play."

So for the hunt was he apparelled,
And forth he rode with heart right well at ease;
And many a strong, deep-chested hound they led
Over the dewy grass betwixt the trees,
And fair white horses fit for the white knees
Of Her the ancients fabled rides a-nights
Betwixt the setting and the rising lights.

Now following up a mighty hart and swift
The King rode long upon that morning tide,
And since his horse was worth a kingdom's gift,
It chanced him all his servants to outride,
Until unto a shaded river-side

He came alone at hottest of the sun,
When all the freshness of the day was done.

Dismounting there, and seeing so far adown
The red-finned fishes o'er the gravel play,
It seemed that moment worth his royal crown
To hide there from the burning of the day,
Wherefore he did off all his rich array,
And tied his horse unto a neighbouring tree,
And in the water sported leisurely.

But when he was fulfilled of this delight
He gat him to the bank well satisfied,
And thought to do on him his raiment bright
And homeward to his royal house to ride;
But 'mazed and angry, looking far and wide
Nought saw he of his horse and rich attire,
And 'gainst the thief 'gan threaten vengeance dire.

But little help his fury was to him,
So lustily he 'gan to shout and cry.
None answered; still the lazy chub did swim
By inches 'gainst the stream; away did fly
The small pied bird, but nathless stayed anigh,
And o'er the stream still plied his fluttering trade,
Of such a helpless man not much afraid.

Weary of crying in that lonely place
He ceased at last, and thinking what to do,
E'en as he was, up stream he set his face,

Since not far off a certain house he knew
Where dwelt his ranger, a lord leal and true,
Who many a bounty at his hands had had,
And now to do him ease would be right glad.

Thither he hastened on, and as he went
The hot sun sorely burned his naked skin,
The whiles he thought, "When he to me has lent
Fine raiment, and at ease I sit within
His coolest chamber clad in linen thin,
And drinking wine, the best that he has got,
I shall forget this troublous day and hot."

Now note, that while he thus was on his way,
And still his people for their master sought,
There met them one who in the King's array
Bestrode his very horse, and as they thought
Was none but he in good time to them brought,
Therefore they hailed him King, and so all rode
From out the forest to his fair abode.

And there in royal guise he sat at meat,
Served, as his wont was, 'neath the canopy,
And there the hounds fawned round about his feet,
And there that city's elders did he see,
And with his lords took counsel what should be;
And there at supper when the day waxed dim
The Queen within his chamber greeted him.

LEAVE we him there; for to the ranger's gate
The other came, and on the horn he blew,
Till peered the wary porter through the grate
To see if he, perchance, the blower knew,
Before he should the wicket-gate undo;
But when he saw him standing there, he cried,
"What dost thou, friend, to show us all thine hide?

"We list not buy to-day or flesh or fell;
Go home and get thyself a shirt at least,
If thou wouldst aught, for saith our vicar well,
That God hath given clothes e'en to the beast."
Therewith he turned to go, but as he ceased
The King cried out, "Open, O foolish man!
I am thy lord and King, Jovinian;

"Go now, and tell thy master I am here
Desiring food and clothes, and in this plight,
And then hereafter need'st thou have no fear,
Because thou didst not know me at first sight."
"Yea, yea, I am but dreaming in the night,"
The carle said, "and I bid thee, friend, to dream,
Come through! here is no gate, it doth but seem."

With that his visage vanished from the grate;
But when the King now found himself alone,
He hurled himself against the mighty gate,
And beat upon it madly with a stone,
Half wondering midst his rage how any one

Could live, if longed-for things he chanced to lack;
But midst all this, at last the gate flew back,

And there the porter stood, brown-bill in hand,
And said, "Ah, fool, thou makest this ado,
Wishing before my lord's high seat to stand;
Thou shalt be gladder soon hereby to go,
Or surely nought of handy blows I know.
Come, willy-nilly, thou shalt tell this tale
Unto my lord, if aught it may avail."

With that his staff he handled, as if he
Would smite the King, and said, "Get on before!
St. Mary! now thou goest full leisurely,
Who, erewhile, fain wouldst batter down the door.
See now, if ere this matter is passed o'er,
I come to harm, yet thou shalt not escape,
Thy back is broad enow to pay thy jape."

Half blind with rage the King before him passed,
But nought of all he doomed him to durst say,
Lest he from rest nigh won should yet be cast,
So with a swelling heart he took his way,
Thinking right soon his shame to cast away,
And the carle followed still, ill satisfied
With such a wretched losel to abide.

Fair was the ranger's house and new and white,
And by the King built scarce a year agone,
And carved about for this same lord's delight

With woodland stories deftly wrought in stone;
There oft the King was wont to come alone,
For much he loved this lord, who erst had been
A landless squire, a servant of the Queen.

Now long a lord and clad in rich attire,
In his fair hall he sat before the wine
Watching the evening sun's yet burning fire,
Through the close branches of his pleasance shine,
In that mood when man thinks himself divine,
Remembering not whereto we all must come,
Not thinking aught but of his happy home.

From just outside loud mocking merriment
He heard midst this; and therewithal a squire
Came hurrying up, his laughter scarcely spent,
Who said, "My lord, a man in such attire
As Adam's, ere he took the devil's hire,
Who saith that thou wilt know him for the King,
Up from the gate John Porter needs must bring.

"He to the King is nothing like in aught
But that his beard he weareth in such guise
As doth my lord: wilt thou that he be brought?
Perchance some treason 'neath his madness lies."
"Yea," saith the ranger, "that may well be wise,
But haste, for this eve am I well at ease,
Nor would be wearied with such folk as these."

Then went the squire, and coming back again,
The porter and the naked King brought in,
Who thinking now that this should end his pain,
Forgat his fury and the porter's sin,
And said, "Thou wonderest how I came to win
This raiment, that kings long have ceased to wear,
Since Noah's flood has altered all the air?

"Well, thou shalt know, but first I pray thee, Hugh,
Reach me that cloak that lieth on the board,
For certes, though thy folk are leal and true,
It seemeth that they deem a mighty lord
Is made by crown, and silken robe, and sword;
Lo, such are borel folk; but thou and I
Fail not to know the signs of majesty.

"Thou risest not! thou lookest strange on me!
Ah, what is this? Who reigneth in my stead?
How long hast thou been plotting secretly?
Then slay me now, for if I be not dead
Armies will rise up when I nod my head.
Slay me!—or cast thy treachery away,
And have anew my favour from this day."

"Why should I tell thee that thou ne'er wast king?"
The ranger said, "Thou knowest not what I say;
Poor man, I pray God help thee in this thing,
And ere thou diest send thee some good day;
Nor hence unholpen shalt thou go away.

Borel. Ignorant.

Good fellows, this poor creature is but mad,
Take him, and in a coat let him be clad;

"And give him meat and drink, and on this night
Beneath some roof of ours let him abide,
For some day God may set his folly right."
Then spread the King his arms abroad and cried,
"Woe to thy food, thy house, and thee betide,
Thou loathsome traitor! Get ye from the hall,
Lest smitten by God's hand this roof should fall;

"Yea, if the world be but an idle dream,
And God deals nought with it, yet shall ye see
Red flame from out these carven windows stream.
I, I, will burn this vile place utterly,
And strewn with salt the poisonous earth shall be,
That such a wretch of such a man has made,
That so such Judases may grow afraid."

Thus raving, those who held him he shook off
And rushed from out the hall, nigh mad indeed,
And gained the gate, not heeding blow or scoff,
Nor longer of his nakedness took heed,
But ran, he knew not where, at headlong speed
Till, when at last his strength was fully spent,
Worn out, he fell beneath a woody bent.

But for the ranger, left alone in peace,
He bade his folk bring in the minstrelsy;
And thinking of his life, and fair increase

Of all his goods, a happy man was he,
And towards his master felt right lovingly,
And said, "This luckless madman will avail
When next I see the King for one more tale."

MEANWHILE the real King by the road-side lay,
Panting, confused, scarce knowing if he dreamed,
Until at last, when vanished was the day,
Through the dark night far off a bright light gleamed;
Which growing quickly, down the road there streamed
The glare of torches, held by men who ran
Before the litter of a mighty man.

These mixed with soldiers soon the road did fill,
And on their harness could the King behold
The badge of one erst wont to do his will,
A counsellor, a gatherer-up of gold,
Who underneath his rule had now grown old:
Then wrath and bitterness so filled his heart,
That from his wretched lair he needs must start.

And o'er the clatter shrilly did he cry,
"Well met, Duke Peter! ever art thou wise;
Surely thou wilt not let a day go by
Ere thou art good friends with mine enemies;
O fit to rule within a land of lies,
Go on thy journey, make thyself more meet
To sit in hell beneath the devil's feet!"

But as he ceased a soldier drew anear,
And smote him flatling with his sheathèd sword,
And said, "Speak louder, that my lord may hear
And give thee wages for thy ribald word!
Come forth, for I must show thee to my lord,
For he may think thee more than mad indeed,
Who of men's ways has taken wondrous heed."

Now was the litter stayed midmost the road,
And round about, the torches in a ring
Were gathered, and their flickering light now glowed
In gold and gems and many a lordly thing,
And showed that face well known unto the King,
That, smiling yesterday, right humble words
Had spoken midst the concourse of the lords.

But now he said, "Man, thou wert cursing me
If these folk heard aright; what wilt thou then,
Deem'st thou that I have done some wrong to thee,
Or hast thou scathe from any of my men?
In any case tell all thy tale again
When on the judgment-seat thou see'st me sit,
And I will give no careless ear to it."

"The night is dark, and in the summer wind
The torches flicker; canst thou see my face?
Bid them draw nigher yet, and call to mind
Who gave thee all thy riches and thy place—
—Well;—If thou canst, deny me, with such grace
As by the fire-light Peter swore of old,
When in that Maundy-week the night was cold—

"—Alas! canst thou not see I am the King?"
So spoke he, as their eyes met mid the blaze,
And the King saw the dread foreshadowing
Within the elder's proud and stony gaze,
Of what those lips, thin with the lapse of days,
Should utter now; nor better it befell;—
"Friend, a strange story thou art pleased to tell;

"Thy luck it is thou tellest it to me,
Who deem thee mad and let thee go thy way:
The King is not a man to pity thee,
Or on thy folly thy fool's tale to lay:
Poor fool! take this, and with the light of day
Buy food and raiment of some labouring clown,
And by my counsel keep thee from the town,

"For fear thy madness break out in some place
Where folk thy body to the judge must hale,
And then indeed wert thou in evil case—
Press on, sirs! or the time will not avail."
—There stood the King, with limbs that 'gan to fail,
Speechless, and holding in his trembling hand
A coin new stamped for people of the land;

Thereon, with sceptre, crown, and royal robe,
The image of a King, himself, was wrought;
His jewelled feet upon a quartered globe,
As though by him all men were vain and nought.
One moment the red glare the silver caught,
As the lord ceased, the next his hurrying folk
The flaring circle round the litter broke.

The next, their shadows barred a patch of light,
Fast vanishing, all else around was black;
And the poor wretch, left lonely with the night,
Muttered, "I wish the day would ne'er come back,
If all that once I had I now must lack:
Ah God! how long is it since I was King,
Nor lacked enough to wish for anything?"

Then down the lonely road he wandered yet,
Following the vanished lights, he scarce knew why,
Till he began his sorrows to forget,
And, steeped in drowsiness, at last drew nigh
A grassy bank, where, worn with misery,
He slept the dreamless sleep of weariness,
That many a time such wretches' eyes will bless.

But at the dawn he woke, nor knew at first
What ugly chain of grief had brought him there,
Nor why he felt so wretched and accursed;
At last remembering, the fresh morning air,
The rising sun, and all things fresh and fair,
Yet caused some little hope in him to rise,
That end might come to these new miseries.

So looking round about, he saw that he
To his own city gates was come anear;
Then he arose and going warily,
And hiding now and then for very fear

Of folk who bore their goods and country cheer
Unto the city's market, at the last
Unto a stone's-throw of the gate he passed.

But when he drew unto the very gate,
Into the throng of country-folk he came
Who for the opening of the door did wait,
Of whom some mocked, and some cried at him shame,
And some would know his country and his name;
But one into his waggon drew him up,
And gave him milk from out a beechen cup,

And asked him of his name and misery;
Then in his throat a swelling passion rose,
Which yet he swallowed down, and, "Friend," said he,
"Last night I had the hap to meet the foes
Of God and man, who robbed me, and with blows
Stripped off my weed and left me on the way:
Thomas the Pilgrim am I called to-day.

"A merchant am I of another town,
And rich enow to pay thee for thy deed,
If at the King's door thou wilt set me down,
For there a squire I know, who at my need
Will give me food and drink, and fitting weed.
What is thy name? in what place dost thou live?
That I some day great gifts to thee may give."

"Fair sir," the carle said, "I am poor enow,
Though certes food I lack not easily;

My name is Christopher a-Green; I sow
A little orchard set with bush and tree,
And ever there the kind land keepeth me,
For I, now fifty, from a little boy
Have dwelt thereon, and known both grief and joy.

"The house my grandsire built there has grown old,
And certainly a bounteous gift it were
If thou shouldst give me just enough of gold
To build it new; nor shouldst thou lack my prayer
For such a gift." "Nay, friend, have thou no care,"
The King said: "this is but a little thing
To me, who oft am richer than the King."

Now as they talked the gate was opened wide,
And toward the palace went they through the street,
And Christopher walked ever by the side
Of his rough wain, where midst the May-flowers sweet
Jovinian lay, that folk whom they might meet
Might see him not to mock at his bare skin:
So shortly to the King's door did they win.

Then through the open gate Jovinian ran
Of the first court, and no man stayed him there;
But as he reached the second gate, a man
Of the King's household, seeing him all bare
And bloody, cried out, "Whither dost thou fare?
Sure thou art seventy times more mad than mad,
Or else some magic potion thou hast had,

"Whereby thou fear'st not steel or anything."
"But," said the King, "good fellow, I know thee;
And can it be thou knowest not thy King?
Nay, thou shalt have a good reward of me,
That thou wouldst rather have than ten years' fee,
If thou wilt clothe me in fair weed again,
For now to see my council am I fain."

"Out, ribald!" quoth the fellow: "What say'st thou?
Thou art my lord, whom God reward and bless?
Truly before long shalt thou find out how
John Hangman cureth ill folk's wilfulness;
Yea, from his scourge the blood has run for less
Than that which now thou sayest: nay, what say I?
For lighter words have I seen tall men die.

"Come now, the sergeants to this thing shall see!"
So to the guard-room was Jovinian brought,
Where his own soldiers mocked him bitterly,
And all his desperate words they heeded nought;
Until at last there came to him this thought,
That never from this misery should he win,
But, spite of all his struggles, die therein.

And terrible it seemed, that everything
So utterly was changed since yesterday,
That these who were the soldiers of the King,
Ready to lie down in the common way
Before him, nor durst rest if he bade play,

Now stood and mocked him, knowing not the face
At whose command each man there had his place.

"Ah, God!" said he, "is this another earth
From that whereon I stood two days ago?
Or else in sleep have I had second birth?
Or among mocking shadows do I go,
Unchanged myself of flesh and fell, although
My fair weed I have lost and royal gear?
And meanwhile all are changed that I meet here;

"And yet in heart and nowise outwardly."
Amid his wretched thoughts two sergeants came,
Who said, "Hold, sirs! because the King would see
The man who thus so rashly brings him shame,
By taking his high style and spotless name,
That never has been questioned ere to-day.
Come, fool! needs is it thou must go our way."

So at the sight of him all men turned round,
As 'twixt these two across the courts he went,
With downcast head and hands together bound;
While from the windows maid and varlet leant,
And through the morning air fresh laughter sent;
Until unto the threshold they were come
Of the great hall within that kingly home.

Therewith right fast Jovinian's heart must beat,
As now he thought, "Lo, here shall end the strife;
For either shall I sit on mine own seat,

Known unto all, soldier and lord and wife,
Or else is this the ending of my life,
And no man henceforth shall remember me,
And a vain name in records shall I be."

Therewith he raised his head up, and beheld
One clad in gold set on his royal throne,
Gold-crowned, whose hand the ivory sceptre held;
And underneath him sat the Queen alone,
Ringed round with standing lords, of whom not one
Did aught but utmost reverence unto him;
Then did Jovinian shake in every limb.

Yet midst amaze and rage to him it seemed
This man was nowise like him in the face;
But with a marvellous glory his head gleamed,
As though an angel sat in that high place,
Where erst he sat like all his royal race,—
—But their eyes met, and with a stern, calm brow
The shining one cried out, "And where art thou?

"Where art thou, robber of my majesty?"
"Was I not King," he said, "but yesterday?
And though to-day folk give my place to thee,
I am Jovinian; yes, though none gainsay,
If on these very stones thou shouldst me slay,
And though no friend be left for me to moan,
I am Jovinian still, and King alone."

Then said that other, "O thou foolish man,
King was I yesterday, and long before,
Nor is my name aught but Jovinian,
Whom in this house the Queen my mother bore,
Unto my longing father, for right sore
Was I desired before I saw the light;
Thou, fool, art first to speak against my right.

"And surely well thou meritest to die;
Yet ere that I bid lead thee unto death
Hearken to these my lords that stand anigh,
And what this faithful Queen beside me saith,
Then may'st thou many a year hence draw thy breath,
If these should stammer in their speech one whit:
Behold this face, lords, look ye well on it!

"Thou, O fair Queen, say now whose face is this!"
Then cried they, "Hail O Lord Jovinian
Long mayst thou live!" and the Queen knelt to kiss
His gold-shod feet, and through her face there ran
Sweet colour, as she said, "Thou art the man
By whose side I have lain for many a year,
Thou art my lord Jovinian lief and dear."

Then said he, "O thou wretch, hear now and see!
What thing should hinder me to slay thee now?
And yet indeed, such mercy is in me,
If thou wilt kneel down humbly and avow
Thou art no King, but base-born, as I know
Thou art indeed, in mine house shalt thou live,
And as thy service is, so shalt thou thrive."

But the unhappy King laughed bitterly,
The red blood rose to flush his visage wan
Where erst the grey of death began to be;
"Thou liest," he said, "I am Jovinian,
Come of great Kings; nor am I such a man
As still to live when all delight is gone,
As thou might'st do, who sittest on my throne."

No answer made the other for a while,
But sat and gazed upon him steadfastly,
Until across his face there came a smile,
Where scorn seemed mingled with some great pity.
And then he said, "Nathless thou shalt not die,
But live on as thou mayst, a lowly man
Forgetting thou wast once Jovinian."

Then wildly round the hall Jovinian gazed,
Turning about to many a well-known face,
But none of all his folk seemed grieved or mazed,
But stood unmoved, each in his wonted place;
There were the Lords, the Marshal with his mace,
The Chamberlain, the Captain of the Guard,
Grey-headed, with his wrinkled face and hard,

That had peered down so many a lane of war;
There stood the grave ambassadors arow,
Come from half-conquered lands; without the bar
The foreign merchants gazed upon the show,
Willing new things of that great land to know;
Nor was there any doubt in any man
That the gold throne still held Jovinian.

Yea, as the sergeants laid their hands on him,
The mighty hound that crouched before the throne
Flew at him fain to tear him limb from limb,
Though in the woods the brown bear's dying groan
He and that beast had often heard alone.
"Ah!" muttered he, "take thou thy wages too,
Worship the risen sun as these men do."

They thrust him out, and as he passed the door,
The murmur of the stately court he heard
Behind him, and soft footfalls on the floor,
And, though by this somewhat his skin was seared,
Hung back at the rough eager wind afeard;
But from the place they dragged him through the gate,
Wherethrough he oft had rid in royal state.

Then down the streets they led him, where of old,
He, coming back from some well-finished war,
Had seen the line of flashing steel and gold
Wind upwards 'twixt the houses from the bar,
While clashed the bells from wreathed spires afar,
Now moaning, as they haled him on, he said,
"God and the world against one lonely head!"

But soon, the bar being past, they loosed their hold,
And said, "Thus saith by us our Lord the King,
Dwell now in peace, but yet be not so bold
To come again, or to thy lies to cling,
Lest unto thee there fall a worser thing;

And for ourselves we bid thee ever pray
For him who has been good to thee this day."

Therewith they turned away into the town,
And still he wandered on and knew not where,
Till, stumbling at the last, he fell adown,
And looking round beheld a brook right fair,
That ran in pools and shallows here and there,
And on the further side of it a wood,
Nigh which a lowly clay-built hovel stood.

Gazing thereat, it came into his mind
A priest dwelt there, a hermit wise and old,
Whom he had ridden oftentimes to find,
In days when first the sceptre he did hold,
And unto whom his mind he oft had told,
And had good counsel from him, though indeed
A scanty crop had sprung from that good seed.

Therefore he passed the brook with heavy cheer
And toward the little house went speedily,
And at the door knocked, trembling with his fear,
Because he thought, "Will he remember me?
If not, within me must there surely be
Some devil who turns everything to ill,
And makes my wretched body do his will."

So, while such doleful things as this he thought,
There came unto the door the holy man,
Who said, "Good friend, what tidings hast thou brought?"

"Father," he said, "knowest thou Jovinian?
Know'st thou me not, made naked, poor, and wan?
Alas, O father! am I not the King,
The rightful lord of thee and everything?"

"Nay, thou art mad to tell me such a tale!"
The hermit said; "if thou seek'st soul's health here,
Right little will such words as this avail;
It were a better deed to shrive thee clear,
And take the pardon Christ has bought so dear,
Than to an ancient man such mocks to say
That would be fitter for a Christmas play."

So to his hut he got him back again,
And fell the unhappy King upon his knees,
And unto God at last he did complain,
Saying, "Lord God, what bitter things are these?
What hast thou done, that every man that sees
This wretched body, of my death is fain?
O Lord God, give me back myself again!

"E'en if therewith I needs must die straightway.
Indeed I know that since upon the earth
I first did go, I ever day by day
Have grown the worse, who was of little worth
E'en at the best time since my helpless birth.
And yet it pleased thee once to make me King,
Why hast thou made me now this wretched thing?

"Why am I hated so of every one?
Wilt thou not let me live my life again,
Forgetting all the deeds that I have done,
Forgetting my old name, and honours vain,
That I may cast away this lonely pain?
Yet if thou wilt not, help me in this strife,
That I may pass my little span of life,

"Not made a monster by unhappiness.
What shall I say? thou mad'st me weak of will,
Thou wrapped'st me in ease and carelessness,
And yet, as some folk say, thou lovest me still;
Look down, of folly I have had my fill,
And am but now as first thou madest me,
Weak, yielding clay to take impress of thee."

So said he weeping, and but scarce had done,
When yet again came forth that hermit old,
And said, "Alas! my master and my son,
Is this a dream my wearied eyes behold?
What doleful wonder now shall I be told,
Of that ill world that I so long have left?
What thing thy glory from thee has bereft?"

A strange surprise of joy therewith there came
To that worn heart; he said, "For some great sin
The Lord my God has brought me unto shame;
I am unknown of servants, wife, and kin,
Unknown of all the lords that stand within

My father's house; nor didst thou know me more
When e'en just now I stood before thy door.

"Now since thou know'st me, surely God is good,
And will not slay me, and good hope I have
Of help from Him that died upon the rood,
And is a mighty lord to slay and save:
So now again these blind men will I brave,
If thou wilt give me of thy poorest weed,
And some rough food, the which I sorely need;

"Then of my sins thou straight shalt shrive me clean."
Then weeping said the holy man, "Dear lord,
What heap of woes upon thine head has been;
Enter, O King, take this rough gown and cord,
And scanty food my hovel can afford;
And tell me everything thou hast to say;
And then the High God speed thee on thy way."

So when in coarse serge raiment he was clad,
He told him all his pride had made him think;
And showed him of his life both good and bad;
And then being houselled, did he eat and drink,
While in the wise man's heart his words did sink,
For, "God be praised!" he thought, "I am no king,
Who scarcely shall do right in anything!"

Then he made ready for the King his ass,
And bade again, God speed him on the way,
And down the road the King made haste to pass

As it was growing toward the end of day,
With sober joy for troubles passed away;
But trembling still, as onward he did ride,
Meeting few folk upon that even-tide.

So to the city gate being come at last,
He noted there two ancient warders stand,
Whereof one looked askance as he went past,
And whispered low behind his held-up hand
Unto his mate, "The King, who gave command
That if disguised he passed this gate to-day,
No reverence we should do him on the way."

Thereat with joy, Jovinian smiled again,
And so passed onward quickly down the street;
And well-nigh was he eased of all his pain
When he beheld the folk that he might meet
Gaze hard at him, as though they fain would greet
His well-known face, but durst not, knowing well
He would not any of his state should tell.

Withal unto the palace being come,
He lighted down thereby and entered,
And once again it seemed his royal home,
For folk again before him bowed the head;
And to him came a squire, who softly said,
"The Queen awaits thee, O my lord the King,
Within the little hall where minstrels sing,

"Since there thou badst her meet thee on this night."
"Lead on then!" said the King, and in his heart
He said, "Perfay all goeth more than right
And I am King again"; but with a start
He thought of him who played the kingly part
That morn, yet said, "If God will have it so
This man like all the rest my face will know."

So in the Little Hall the Queen he found,
Asleep, as one a spell binds suddenly;
For her fair broidery lay upon the ground,
And in her lap her open hand did lie,
The silken-threaded needle close thereby;
And by her stood that image of the King
In rich apparel, crown and signet-ring.

But when the King stepped forth with angry eye
And would have spoken, came a sudden light,
And changed was that other utterly;
For he was clad in robe of shining white,
Inwrought with flowers of unnamed colours bright,
Girt with a marvellous girdle, and whose hem
Fell to his naked feet and shone in them;

And from his shoulders did two wings arise,
That with the swaying of his body, played
This way and that; of strange and lovely dyes
Their feathers were, and wonderfully made:
And now he spoke, "O King, be not dismayed,
Or think my coming here so strange to be,
For oft ere this have I been close to thee.

"And now thou knowest in how short a space
The God that made the world can unmake thee,
And though He alter in no whit thy face,
Can make all folk forget thee utterly,
That thou to-day a nameless wretch mayst be,
Who yesterday woke up without a peer,
The wide world's marvel and the people's fear.

"Behold, thou oughtest to thank God for this,
That on the hither side of thy dark grave
Thou well hast learned how great a God He is
Who from the heavens countless rebels drave,
Yet turns himself such folk as thee to save;
For many a man thinks nought at all of it.
Till in a darksome land he comes to sit,

"Lamenting everything: so do not thou!
For inasmuch as thou thoughtst not to die
This thing may happen to thee even now,
Because the day unspeakable draws nigh,
When bathed in unknown flame all things shall lie;
And if thou art upon God's side that day,
Unslain, thine earthly part shall pass away.

"Or if thy body in the grave must rot,
Well mayst thou see how small a thing is this,
Whose pain of yesterday now hurts thee not,
Now thou hast come again to earthly bliss,
Though bitter-sweet thou knowest well this is,
And though no coming day can ever see
Ending of happiness where thou mayst be.

"Now must I go, nor wilt thou see me more
Until the day when, unto thee at least,
This world is gone, and an unmeasured shore,
Where all is wonderful and changed, thou seest:
Therefore, farewell! at council and at feast
Thy nobles shalt thou meet as thou hast done,
Nor wilt thou more be strange to any one."

So scarce had he done speaking, ere his wings
Within the doorway of the hall did gleam,
And then he vanished quite; and all these things
Unto Jovinian little more did seem
Than some distinct and well-remembered dream,
From which one wakes amidst a feverish night,
Taking the moonshine for the morning light.

Silent he stood, not moving for a while,
Pondering o'er all these wondrous things, until
The Queen arose from sleep, and with a smile
Said, "O fair lord, your great men by your will
E'en as I speak the banquet-chamber fill,
To greet thee amidst joy and revelling,
Wilt thou not therefore meet them as a King?"

So from that place of marvels having gone,
Half mazed, he soon was clad in rich array,
And sat thereafter on his kingly throne,
As though no other had sat there that day;
Nor did a soul of all his household say
A word about the man who on that morn
Had stood there, naked, helpless, and forlorn.

But ever day by day the thought of it
Within Jovinian's heart the clearer grew,
As o'er his head the ceaseless time did flit,
And everything still towards its ending drew,
New things becoming old, and old things new;
Till, when a moment of eternity
Had passed, grey-headed did Jovinian lie

One sweet May morning, wakeful in his bed;
And thought, "That day is thirty years a-gone
Since useless folly came into my head,
Whereby, before the steps of mine own throne,
I stood in helpless agony alone,
And of the wondrous things that there befell,
When I am gone there will be none to tell:

"No man is now alive who thinks that he,
Who bade thrust out the madman on that tide,
Was other than the King they used to see:
Long years have passed now since the hermit died,
So must I tell the tale, ere by his side
I lie, lest it be unrecorded quite,
Like a forgotten dream in morning light.

"Yea, lest I die ere night come, this same day
Unto some scribe will I tell everything,
That it may lie when I am gone away,
Stored up within the archives of the King;
And may God grant the words thereof may ring
Like His own voice in the next comer's ears!
Whereby his folk shall shed the fewer tears."

So it was done, and at the King's command
A clerk that day did note it every whit,
And after by a man of skilful hand
In golden letters fairly was it writ;
Yet little heed the new King took of it
That filled the throne when King Jovinian died,
So much did all things feed his swelling pride.

But whether God chastised him in his turn,
And he grew wise thereafter, I know not;
I think by eld alone he came to learn
How lowly on some day must be his lot.
But ye, O Kings, think all that ye have got
To be but gawds cast out upon some heap,
And stolen the while the Master was asleep.

THE story done, for want of happier things,
Some men must even fall to talk of kings;
Some trouble of a far-off Grecian isle,
Some hard Sicilian craftsman's cruel guile
Whereby he raised himself to be as God,
Till good men slew him; the fell Persian rod
As blighting as the deadly pestilence,
The brazen net of armed men from whence
Was no escape; the fir-built Norway hall
Filled with the bonders waiting for the fall
Of the great roof whereto the torch is set;
The laughing mouth, beneath the eyes still wet
With more than sea-spray, as the well-loved land
The freeman still looks back on, while his hand
Clutches the tiller, and the eastern breeze
Grows fresh and fresher: many things like these
They talked about, till they seemed young again,
Remembering what a glory and a gain
Their fathers deemed the death of kings to be.
And yet amidst it, some smiled doubtfully
For thinking how few men escape the yoke,
From this or that man's hand, and how most folk
Must needs be kings and slaves the while they live,
And take from this man, and to that man give
Things hard enow. Yet as they mused, again
The minstrels raised some high heroic strain
That led men on to battle in old times;
And midst the glory of its mingling rhymes,
Their hard hearts softened, and strange thoughts arose
Of some new end to all life's cruel foes.

THE WRITER OF THE "EARTHLY PARADISE"

Life and Works

William Morris (1834–96), poet, artist, and Socialist, was born at Walthamstow, and was educated at Marlborough School and Oxford. After being articled as an architect he was for some years a painter, and then joined in founding the manufacturing and decorating firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co., in which Rossetti, Burne-Jones, and other artists were partners. By this and other means he did much to influence the public taste in furnishing and decorating. He was one of the originators of the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, to which he contributed poems, tales, and essays, and in 1858 he published *Defence of Guenevere and other Poems*. *The Life and Death of Jason* followed in 1867, the *Earthly Paradise* in 1868–70, and *Love is Enough* in 1875. In the last-mentioned year he made a translation in verse of Virgil's *Æneid*. Travels in Iceland led to the writing of *Three Northern Love Stories* and the epic of *Sigurd the Volsung* (1876). His translation of the *Odyssey* in verse appeared in 1887. A series of prose romances began with *The House of the Wolfings* (1889), and included *The Roots of the Mountains, Story of the Glittering Plain, The Wood beyond the World, The Well at the World's End* (1896), and posthumously *The Water of the Wondrous Isles* and *Story of the Sundering Flood*. In addition to poems and tales Morris produced various

illuminated manuscripts, including two of Fitzgerald's *Omar Khayyam*, and many controversial writings, among which are tales and tracts in advocacy of Socialism. To this class belong the *Dream of John Ball* (1888) and *News from Nowhere* (1891). In 1890 Morris started the Kelmscott Press, for which he designed type and decorations. For his subjects as a writer he drew upon classic and Gothic models alike. He may perhaps be regarded as the chief of the modern romantic school, inspired by the love of beauty for its own sake; his poetry is rich and musical, and he has a power of description which makes his pictures live and glow, but his narratives sometimes suffer from length and slowness of movement.

An Appreciation by Alfred Noyes

William Morris, "poet, artist, manufacturer, and Socialist," was born on the 24th of March, 1834. He went up to Exeter College, Oxford, in January 1853, with a considerable knowledge and love of architecture, poetry, and old stories. He went up at a time when "all reading men were Tennysonians; and all sets of reading men talked poetry"; when, moreover, the spirit of Darwin was brooding over the intellectual world and the Crimean war was about to set the younger generation thinking about schemes of social regeneration. All creeds and systems were going into the intellectual melting-pot. Nothing was a very sure refuge for the mind but the beauty of the visible world as revealed and made enduring in art. Everything else appeared to be changing, decaying, passing away. The visible world itself was not so beautiful as it had once been.

Art was the consoler of the pessimists and the redeemer of the optimists. Ruskin was the prophet of the new religion, "the religion of beauty"; and hundreds that had grown sick of the controversial wrangles of the time were turning to it for relief with all the passion which their forefathers would have felt in seeking the consolations of the Church. Morris himself, when he came up to Oxford, has been described as a High Churchman and a Neo-Catholic. It may very confidently be affirmed that he was neither more nor less than a worshipper of beauty, and that the ritual of the Church was nothing more or less to him than a form of style.

'Twas in Church on Palm Sunday
Listening what the priest did say
Of the kiss that did betray,

That the thought did come to me
How the olives used to be
Growing in Gethsemane.

That the thoughts upon me came
Of the lantern's steady flame,
Of the softly whispered name.

Of how kiss and words did sound
While the olives stood around,
While the robe lay on the ground.

Then the words the Lord did speak
And that kiss in Holy Week
Dreams of many a kiss did make:

Lovers kiss beneath the moon,
With it sorrow cometh soon:
Juliet's within the tomb:

Angelico's in quiet light,
'Mid the aureoles very bright
God is looking from the height.

There the monk his love doth meet:—

and so forth, he wrote, in a poem which he sent to Cormell Price (not included in any of his volumes). And it is obvious that he was not exactly listening to "what the priest did say," from a "High Churchman's" point of view, but simply and solely from the point of view of an artist. Even in church he was striving to build a "shadowy isle of bliss midmost the beatings of the steely sea." He was probably aided and abetted in this by the great friendship of his Oxford days which is, perhaps, the most important fact of that period of his life—the friendship he formed with Burne-Jones, who had also gone up to Exeter College in 1853.

He was "aided and abetted," I say, because I do not think he was influenced very much by Burne-Jones or by any one else. His life has a very extraordinary completeness and coherence. It is a happy chance that the whole childhood of William Morris may be seen at a glance, as on a single splendid fragment of his own romance-empurpled tapestry. About the year 1841, any one wandering near Woodford Hall, on the borders of Epping Forest, and within sight of the clear Thames, with its "white and ruddy-brown sails moving among cornfields," might have been surprised by the vision of a curly-haired young knight in glittering armour, riding through the strange glades of hornbeam on one of Titania's palfreys, a pony such as in fairyland might have been "tethered to a poppy or stabled in a tree." But here, in broad noon, it was pacing proudly beneath a greaved and breastplated young warrior from Joyous Gard, a child-champion shining through the fairy-fringes of that sunny nook of unspoilt England, like some virgin star through the branches of Broceliande, in quest of the "beauty folded up in forests old!" The small

knight-errant was, of course, no ghost of Galahad or Percivale, but the future poet of the *Earthly Paradise;* and his age was about seven summers.

The prosaic interpretation of this picture is that he had been given a toy suit of armour; but as he made such use of it we may safely assume that it corresponded to a desire of his own; and, indeed, it seems in a sense the natural outcome, the glittering crystallisation as it were, of all the other external facts and features of his childhood's kingdom—that wonderful Wood beyond our world's end, which can only be entered upon the wings of poetry, but can never even be approached along the crawling highways of reason. The picture is worthy of note, because it really does help to establish at the outset the spiritual continuity of Morris's life, and to show, for instance, that Mr. Swinburne was justified in saying of Morris's first volume, *The Defence of Guenevere*: "It seems to have been now lauded and now decried as the result and expression of a school rather than a man, of a theory or tradition than a poet . . . those who so judged were blind guides. Such things as were in this book are taught and learnt in no school but that of instinct. Upon no piece of work in the world was the impress of native character ever more distinctly stamped, more deeply branded."

Never was Art more the child of Memory than in the case of William Morris. His early days at Woodford Hall were, consciously or unconsciously, a fount of inspiration to the end of his life. The self-contained mediæval system of the house and the old festivals that it observed must have meant a good deal to the imaginative youngster who made it his playground. Twelfth Night was one of the great days of the year at Wood-

ford Hall, and the masque of St. George was always then presented with considerable elaboration. It is probably not too fanciful to say that this determined the character of some of the masque-like poems in Morris's first volume and, perhaps, even of the later morality play, *Love is Enough*. Those who know childhood best will be the most likely to go further and say that some of the peculiarly vivid hunting, roasting, and feasting passages in *Jason* derive some of their glamour from that early proximity of Epping Forest, and the fact that as a child William Morris was allowed to roast the rabbits and fieldfares which he shot for his own supper. It was an affair of the imagination even in those earliest days; for we are told that his great ambition was to shoot his game with bow and arrows. Like most great men, Morris retained his childhood to an exceptional degree; and, with all due deference to his critics, who find a more solemn import in the mere fact that he endeavours "to take up the lost threads of the mediæval artistic tradition," I can only see him still "making believe," attempting to build his shadowy isle of bliss, yearning to shoot his game with bow and arrows, and striving to recapture the happiness of his own childhood's kingdom.

Morris's father had a great liking for the old churches in the neighbourhood of Woodford Hall, with their monuments and brasses; and his young son used to accompany him on visits to them. When he was eight years old William Morris was taken to see Canterbury. On the same holiday he saw the church of Minster in Thanet, and it is said that fifty years later, never having seen it in the interval, he described the church in some detail from that memory. "Gothic architecture" could have been little more than a romantic phrase to him at

that age; yet if his father really loved it and spoke simply to him about it, a spire might seem more like a soaring prayer to a child than anything built with hands could seem to a man. At any rate the glorious impression that the individual scenes left upon him is indubitable. It must be remembered that they meant—at the very least—great pillars and dark aisles and stained glass and dim rich streaming lights over cold mysterious tombs. It must be remembered that they meant curious inscriptions and strange recumbent figures in eternal armour, with frozen swords and stark upturned feet. The memory certainly survives in the *Guenevere* volume, and gives it much of its atmosphere. The *naïveté* of some of its language is that of a child rather than of the Middle Ages. For instance, when Rapunzel sings—

> My mother taught me prayers
> To say when I had need;
> I have so many cares,
> That I can take no heed
> Of many words in them;
> But I remember this:

was ever the very spirit of childhood voiced so perfectly as in the lines that follow—though the child itself be only seen through a stained-glass window darkly?—

> Yet besides *I have made this*
> *By myself:* Give me a kiss,
> Dear God, dwelling up in heaven!
> . . . . .
> Yea, besides, I have made this:
> Lord, give Mary a dear kiss,
> And let gold Michael, who look'd down,
> When I was here, on Rouen town
> From the spire, bring me that kiss
> On a lily! Lord do this!

It is curious, too, how the dumb stone of *King Arthur's Tomb* seems to make almost a third character in that wonderful interview between Guenevere and Lancelot. The tomb itself is hardly mentioned, but the reader gradually gets an almost physical realisation of its palpable and stony presence; and, though it was in later years that Morris acquired his knowledge, one may quite safely affirm it to have been his childhood that gave the glamour when he wrote—

> Edward the king is dead, at Westminster
> The carvers smooth the curls of his long beard.

This atmosphere pervades the whole of Morris's first volume, and though it may be said to belong to the manner of his school, it belongs also to an architectural region which the other Pre-Raphaelite poets left comparatively unexplored, a region into which it may quite justly be said that Morris first wandered in his own childhood and apart from any influence but that of his own father.

In the childhood of most impressionable people there are usually one or two moments, events, or landmarks of which the memory is as vivid throughout the whole of their lives as the footprints on the sand in *Robinson Crusoe*. It is probable, for instance, that Stevenson in his childhood had been tremendously impressed, and perhaps terrified, by some blind beggar with a tapping stick like those that appear in *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped*. However that may be, there are two early imprints upon the mind of William Morris that probably—taken with the rest of his early environment—would count for quite as much in determining his choice of the Middle Ages for his "form of style" as any later

influence. One of these is the fact that when he lived at Woodford Hall, there were stocks and a cage there on a bit of wayside green in the middle of the village; and he himself has said in a letter to his daughter, that he used to regard them with considerable terror and decidedly preferred to walk on the other side of the road. To my mind there is not the slightest doubt that this early and imaginative dread is responsible for the extraordinarily vivid sense of terror with regard to such instruments which he displays in depicting Sir Peter Harpdon's torture. The second of these footprints on the sand he has recorded in his *Lecture on the Lesser Arts of Life*: "Well I remember as a boy my first acquaintance with a room hung with faded greenery at Queen Elizabeth's Lodge, by Chingford Hatch, in Epping Forest, and the impression of romance that it made upon me! a feeling that always comes back on me when I read Sir Walter Scott's *Antiquary* and come to the description of the Green Room at Monkbarns, amongst which the novelist has imbedded the fresh and glittering verses of the summer poet Chaucer: yes, that was more than upholstery, believe me."

It is quite possible that here we have Morris's first little private gateway into the greenwoods of Chaucer. At any rate, it is quite obvious that all his adventures were really his own, and that he made his own discoveries of beauty as he went along his own winding path. As a rule it is not profitable to indulge in such conjectures and suggestions as the foregoing; but the case of Morris is exceptional; and as he has been so often treated in the Pre-Raphaelite manner as one of a school, it becomes all the more desirable to show the unity and continuity of his intellectual life. Not only

were his sense-perceptions extremely acute, but his memory of them and all their associations was extraordinary. It was not only the big things like churches that he was able to remember for fifty years after seeing them once in his childhood. "To this day," wrote Morris in his latter years, "the smell of May reminds me of going to bed by daylight." Those who fully understand what such a remark implies will also understand what we mean by saying that Woodford Hall, his early home, was the germ of all Morris's later work. He extended the boundaries of his world; but he never shifted its centre. Woodford Hall, with the clear Thames flowing past its door, and the scents of the May-tide in its garden, and the bloom of the plums upon its walls, was at the heart of all his works, even when he became a Socialist. It thrust itself up through his theories like the boughs of the Branstock through the hall of the Niblungs. More perhaps than any other English poet, Morris gives expression to that emotion which Tennyson called "the passion of the past." In Morris this passion is intense to the point of pain. It appears under many disguises. His Utopias of the past, though he projected them into the future, were in many of their aspects hardly more than a lyrical cry for his own dead days. His tales of the Middle Ages are as it were remembered from a past of nearer date, a past in which he had himself lived. Woodford Hall was the nucleus of that "shadowy isle of bliss" which William Morris was ever afterwards striving to build—for himself and for others —midmost the beatings of the world's bitter and steely sea. At Kelmscott Manor, which he loved so dearly that he broke down when forced to leave it; or on a tub at Hammersmith, that was his only strife—to realise the

Earthly Paradise. The Earthly Paradise was enough for him. He, indeed, desired no golden groves or quiet seats of the just. The sights and sounds and scents of the immediate May-time were all that he desired. But these, with the youth that seemed necessary to complete them, were ever passing away. *Passing Away* is the burden of his poetry—so much so that one might almost say it is possessed with the long anguish of the fear of death. The only philosophical utterance he ever made about the matter was that perhaps change and death were necessary or there would be no good stories—our finest stories being those that told of oldest and saddest happenings. And when he was brought face to face with the fact that he could not "make quick-coming death a little thing, or bring again the pleasure of past years," he turned instinctively to the Middle Ages as a permanent and definite form of style, beyond the reach of change, whereby he might embody what he loved and raise it above the beatings of that bitter sea. He turned to the Middle Ages not as a mere æsthete seeking an anodyne, but as a child turns to fairyland. It was his method of removing what he loved out of space and time in order to view it in the light of eternity. He deliberately adopted the convention that made Troy a belfried town like Bruges and Chartres, because he felt that this, too, was another method of defying time, and that he had thus in some strange way the power of building himself a continuing city. He felt an altogether modern and scholarly pleasure in the anachronism, a little shock of delight as he brought the facts of history into collision and resolved the resultant discord into harmony by a deeper note. He felt a peculiarly modern pleasure as his fabled cities rose to music, a pleasure

that separates him by many centuries from Chaucer (to whom he is often very carelessly likened) on the one hand; while there is a depth of sincere feeling, a passionate desire, a reality of self-expression, living and breathing through it all which entirely differentiates his work from that of the perverse and paradoxical æsthetes who followed him. His world is an entirely remembered one; and it is largely this that gives his work vitality, and sets it apart from the work of Wardour Street connoisseurs. It is Morris's craving to capture the golden moments that slipped out of his own living hands (a craving of the same kind as that expressed by Keats in his Odes), which lifts his work, not so much in great single lines as in its whole wistful atmosphere, to the level of high poetry. It is this that fills it with the light of that Eternity which he always refrained from attempting to fathom; and it is this that allows one to see in his pictures of earthly beauty that high intellectual passion which, conscious or unconscious, is the first essential to great art. First and last, art is religion. There is no room in it for preciosity—no room in it for anything but the Eternal. There was no preciosity in William Morris's choice of the Middle Ages as his "form of style." He turned to them quite naturally, as world-weary men turn to their childhood, knowing perhaps that except as a little child in glittering armour he could not enter into his Kingdom of Heaven.

SVEND AND HIS BRETHREN

The following tale is one of Morris's early prose romances and was contributed to the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* of 1856. It is given here for purposes of literary comparison with the foregoing verse romances from the *Earthly Paradise*, and it is suggested that the reader should attempt the rendering of portions of it into one or other of the poetic forms represented in the three verse stories of this volume.

A KING in the olden time ruled over a mighty nation: a proud man he must have been, any man who was king of that nation: hundreds of lords, each a prince over many people, sat about him in the council chamber, under the dim vault, that was blue like the vault of heaven, and shone with innumerable glistenings of golden stars.

North, south, east, and west, spread that land of his, the sea did not stop it; his empire clomb the high mountains, and spread abroad its arms over the valleys of them; all along the sea-line shone cities set with their crowns of towers in the midst of broad bays, each fit, it seemed, to be a harbour for the navies of all the world.

Inland the pastures and cornlands lay, chequered much with climbing, over-tumbling grape-vines, under the sun that crumbled their clods, and drew up the young wheat in the spring time, under the rain that made the long grass soft and fine, under all fair fertilising influences: the streams leapt down from the mountain

tops, or cleft their way through the ridged ravines: they grew great rivers, like seas each one.

The mountains were cloven, and gave forth from their scarred sides wealth of ore and splendour of marble; all things this people that King Valdemar ruled over could do: they levelled mountains, that over the smooth roads the wains might go, laden with silk and spices from the sea: they drained lakes, that the land might yield more and more, as year by year the serfs, driven like cattle, but worse fed, worse housed, died slowly, scarce knowing that they had souls; they builded them huge ships, and said that they were masters of the sea too; only, I trow the sea was an unruly subject, and often sent them back their ships cut into more pieces than the pines of them were, when the adze first fell upon them; they raised towers, and bridges, and marble palaces with endless corridors rose-scented, and cooled with welling fountains.

They sent great armies and fleets to all the points of heaven that the wind blows from, who took and burned many happy cities, wasted many fields and valleys, blotted out from the memory of men the names of nations, made their men's lives a hopeless shame and misery to them, their women's lives a disgrace, and then—came home to have flowers thrown on them in showers, to be feasted and called heroes.

Should not then their king be proud of them? Moreover they could fashion stone and brass into the shapes of men; they could write books; they knew the names of the stars, and their number; they knew what moved the passions of men in the hearts of them, and could draw you up cunningly catalogues of virtues and vices; their wise men could prove to you that any lie was true,

that any truth was false, till your head grew dizzy, and your heart sick, and you almost doubted if there were a God.

Should not then their king be proud of them? Their men were strong in body, and moved about gracefully —like dancers; and the purple-black, scented hair of their gold-clothed knights seemed to shoot out rays under the blaze of light that shone like many suns in the king's halls. Their women's faces were very fair in red and white, their skins fair and half-transparent like the marble of their mountains, and their voices sounded like the rising of soft music from step to step of their own white palaces.

Should not then their king be proud of such a people, who seemed to help so in carrying on the world to its consummate perfection, which they even hoped their grandchildren would see?

Alas! alas! they were slaves—king and priest, noble and burgher, just as much as the meanest tasked serf, perhaps more even than he, for they were so willingly, but he unwillingly enough.

They could do everything but justice, and truth, and mercy; therefore God's judgments hung over their heads, not fallen yet, but surely to fall one time or other.

For ages past they had warred against one people only, whom they could not utterly subdue: a feeble people in numbers, dwelling in the very midst of them, among the mountains; yet now they were pressing them close; acre after acre, with seas of blood to purchase each acre, had been wrested from the free people, and their end seemed drawing near; and this time the king, Valdemar, had marched to their land

with a great army, to make war on them, he boasted to himself, almost for the last time.

A walled town in the free land; in that town, a house built of rough, splintery stones; and in a great low-browed room of that house, a grey-haired man pacing to and fro impatiently: "Will she never come?" he says, "it is two hours since the sun set; news, too, of the enemy's being in the land; how dreadful if she is taken!" His great broad face is marked with many furrows made by the fierce restless energy of the man; but there is a wearied look on it, the look of a man who, having done his best, is yet beaten; he seemed to long to be gone and be at peace: he, the fighter in many battles, who often had seemed with his single arm to roll back the whole tide of fight, felt despairing enough now; this last invasion, he thought, must surely quite settle the matter; wave after wave, wave after wave, had broken on that dear land and been rolled back from it, and still the hungry sea pressed on; they must be finally drowned in that sea; how fearfully they had been tried for their sins. Back again to his anxiety concerning Cissela, his daughter, go his thoughts, and he still paces up and down wearily, stopping now and then to gaze intently on things which he had seen a hundred times; and the night has altogether come on.

At last the blast of a horn from outside, challenge and counter-challenge, and the wicket to the court-yard is swung open; for this house, being in a part of the city where the walls are somewhat weak, is a little fortress in itself, and is very carefully guarded. The old man's face brightened at the sound of the new comers, and he went toward the entrance of the house where he was met by two young knights fully armed, and a maiden.

"Thank God you are come," he says; but stops when he sees her face, which is quite pale, almost wild with some sorrow. "The saints! Cissela, what is it?" he says, "Father, Eric will tell you." Then suddenly a clang, for Eric has thrown on the ground a richly-jewelled sword, sheathed, and sets his foot on it, crunching the pearls on the sheath; then says, flinging up his head,—"There, father, the enemy is in the land; may that happen to every one of them! but for my part I have accounted for two already." "Son Eric, son Eric, you talk for ever about yourself; quick, tell me about Cissela instead: if you go on boasting and talking always about yourself, you will come to no good end, son, after all." But as he says this, he smiles nevertheless, and his eyes glisten.

"Well, father, listen—such a strange thing she tells us, not to be believed, if she did not tell us herself; the enemy has suddenly got generous, one of them at least, which is something of a disappointment to me—ah! pardon, about myself again; and that is about myself too. Well, father, what am I to do?—But Cissela, she wandered some way from her maidens, when—ah! but I never could tell a story properly, let her tell it herself; here, Cissela!—well, well, I see she is better employed, talking namely, how should I know what! with Siur in the window-seat yonder—but she told us that, as she wandered almost by herself, she presently heard shouts and saw many of the enemy's knights riding quickly towards her; whereat she knelt only and prayed to God, who was very gracious to her; for when, as she thought, something dreadful was about to happen, the chief of the knights (a very noble-looking man, she said) rescued her, and, after he had gazed earnestly into her

face, told her she might go back again to her own home, and her maids with her, if only she would tell him where she dwelt and her name; and withal he sent three knights to escort her some way toward the city; then he turned and rode away with all his knights but those three, who, when they knew that he had quite gone, she says, began to talk horribly, saying things whereof in her terror she understood the import only: then, before worse came to pass came I and slew two, as I said, and the other ran away 'lustily with a good courage'; and that is the sword of one of the slain knights, or, as one might rather call them, rascally caitiffs."

The old man's thoughts seemed to have gone wandering after his son had finished; for he said nothing for some time, but at last spoke dejectedly.

"Eric, brave son, when I was your age I too hoped, and my hopes are come to this at last; you are blind in your hopeful youth, Eric, and do not see that this king (for the king it certainly was) will crush us, and not the less surely because he is plainly not ungenerous, but rather a good, courteous knight. Alas! poor old Gunnar, broken down now and ready to die, as your country is! How often, in the olden time, thou used'st to say to thyself, as thou didst ride at the head of our glorious house, 'this charge may finish this matter, this battle must.' They passed away, those gallant fights, and still the foe pressed on, and hope, too, slowly ebbed away, as the boundaries of our land grew less and less: behold this is the last wave but one or two, and then for a sad farewell to name and freedom. Yet, surely the end of the world must come when we are swept from off the face of the earth. God waits long, they say, before he avenges his own."

As he was speaking, Siur and Cissela came nearer to him, and Cissela, all traces of her late terror gone from her face now, raising her lips to his bended forehead, kissed him fondly, and said, with glowing face,

"Father, how can I help our people? Do they want deaths? I will die. Do they want happiness? I will live miserably through years and years, nor ever pray for death."

Some hope or other seemed growing up in his heart, and showing through his face; and he spoke again, putting back the hair from off her face, and clasping it about with both his hands, while he stooped to kiss her.

"God remember your mother, Cissela! Then it was no dream after all, but true perhaps, as indeed it seemed at the time; but it must come quickly, that woman's deliverance, or not at all. When was it that I heard that old tale, that sounded even then true to my ears? for we have not been punished for nought, my son; that is not God's way. It comes across my memory somehow, mingled in a wonderful manner with the purple of the pines on the hill-side, with the fragrance of them borne from far towards me; for know, my children, that in times past, long, long past now, we did an evil deed; for our forefathers, who have been dead now, and forgiven so long ago, once mad with rage at some defeat from their enemies, fired a church, and burned therein many women who had fled thither for refuge; and from that time a curse cleaves to us. Only they say, that at the last we may be saved from utter destruction by a woman; I know not. God grant it may be so."

Then she said, "Father, brother, and you, Siur, come

with me to the chapel; I wish you to witness me make an oath."

Her face was pale, her lips were pale, her golden hair was pale; but not pale, it seemed, from any sinking of blood, but from gathering of intensest light from somewhere, her eyes perhaps, for they appeared to burn inwardly.

They followed the sweeping of her purple robe in silence through the low heavy-beamed passages: they entered the little chapel, dimly lighted by the moon that night, as it shone through one of the three arrow-slits of windows at the east end. There was little wealth of marble there, I trow; little time had those fighting men for stone-smoothing. Albeit, one noted many semblances of flowers even in the dim half-light, and here and there the faces of BRAVE men, roughly cut enough, but grand, because the hand of the carver had followed his loving heart. Neither was there gold wanting to the altar and its canopy; and above the low pillars of the nave hung banners, taken from the foe by the men of that house, gallant with gold and jewels.

She walked up to the altar and took the blessed book of the Gospels from the left side of it; then knelt in prayer for a moment or two, while the three men stood behind her reverently. When she rose she made a sign to them, and from their scabbards gleamed three swords in the moonlight; then, while they held them aloft, and pointed toward the altar, she opened the book at the page whereon was painted Christ the Lord dying on the cross, pale against the gleaming gold: she said, in a firm voice, "Christ God, who diedst for all men, so help me, as I refuse not life, happiness, even honour, for this people whom I love."

Then she kissed the face so pale against the gold, and knelt again.

But when she had risen, and before she could leave the space by the altar, Siur had stepped up to her, and seized her hurriedly, folding both his arms about her; she let herself be held there, her bosom against his; then he held her away from him a little space, holding her by the arms near the shoulder; then he took her hands and laid them across his shoulders, so that now she held him.

And they said nothing; what could they say? Do you know any word for what they meant?

And the father and brother stood by, looking quite awestruck, more so they seemed than by her solemn oath. Till Siur, raising his head from where it lay, cried out aloud: "May God forgive me as I am true to her! hear you, father and brother?"

Then said Cissela: "May God help me in my need, as I am true to Siur."

And the others went, and they two were left standing there alone, with no little awe over them, strange and shy as they had never yet been to each other. Cissela shuddered, and said in a quick whisper: "Siur, on your knees! and pray that these oaths may never clash."

"Can they, Cissela?" he said.

"O love," she cried, "you have loosed my hand; take it again, or I shall die, Siur!"

He took both her hands, he held them fast to his lips, to his forehead; he said: "No, God does not allow such things; truth does not lie; you are truth; this need not be prayed for."

She said; "Oh, forgive me! yet—yet this old chapel is damp and cold even in the burning summer weather.

O knight Siur, something strikes through me; I pray you kneel and pray."

He looked steadily at her for a long time without answering, as if he were trying once for all to become indeed one with her; then said: "Yes, it is possible; in no other way could you give up everything."

Then he took from off his finger a thin golden ring, and broke it in two, and gave her the one half, saying: "When will they come together?"

Then within a while they left the chapel, and walked as in a dream between the dazzling lights of the hall, where the knights sat now, and between those lights sat down together, dreaming still the same dream each of them; while all the knights shouted for Siur and Cissela. Even if a man had spent all his life looking for sorrowful things, even if he sought for them with all his heart and soul, and even though he had grown grey in that quest, yet would he have found nothing in all the world, or perhaps in all the stars either, so sorrowful as Cissela.

They had accepted her sacrifice after long deliberation, they had arrayed her in purple and scarlet, they had crowned her with gold wrought about with jewels, they had spread abroad the veil of her golden hair; yet now, as they led her forth in the midst of the band of knights, her brother Eric holding fast her hand, each man felt like a murderer when he beheld her face, whereon was no tear, wherein was no writhing of muscle, twitching of nerve, wherein was no sorrow-mark of her own, but only the sorrow-mark which God sent her, and which she *must* perforce wear.

Yet they had not caught eagerly at her offer, they had said at first almost to a man: "Nay, this thing shall

not be, let us die altogether rather than this." Yet as they sat and said this, to each man of the council came floating dim memories of that curse of the burned women, and its remedy; to many it ran rhythmically, an old song better known by the music than the words, heard once and again, long ago, when the gusty wind overmastered the chestnut-boughs, and strewed the smooth sward with their star-leaves.

Withal came thoughts to each man, partly selfish, partly wise and just, concerning his own wife and children, concerning children yet unborn; thoughts too of the glory of the old name; all that had been suffered and done that the glorious free land might yet be a nation.

And the spirit of hope, never dead but sleeping only, woke up within their hearts: "We may yet be a people," they said to themselves, "if we can but get breathing time."

And as they thought these things, and doubted, Siur rose up in the midst of them and said: "You are right in what you think, countrymen, and she is right; she is altogether good and noble; send her forth."

Then, with one look of utter despair at her as she stood statue-like, he left the council, lest he should fall down and die in the midst of them, he said; yet he died not then, but lived for many years afterwards.

But they rose from their seats, and when they were armed, and she royally arrayed, they went with her, leading her through the dear streets, whence you always saw the great pine-shadowed mountains; she went away from all that was dear to her, to go and sit a crowned queen in the dreary marble palace, whose outer walls rose right up from the weary-hearted sea. She could

not think, she durst not; she feared, if she did, that she would curse her beauty, almost curse the name of love, curse Siur, though she knew he was right, for not slaying her; she feared that she might curse God.

So she thought not at all, steeping her senses utterly in forgetfulness of the happy past, destroying all anticipation of the future: yet, as they left the city amid the tears of women, and fixed sorrowful gaze of men, she turned round once, and stretched her arms out involuntarily, like a dumb senseless thing, towards the place where she was born, and where her life grew happier day by day, and where his arms first crept round about her.

She turned away and thought, but in a cold speculative manner, how it was possible that she was bearing this sorrow; as she often before had wondered, when slight things vexed her overmuch, how people had such sorrows and lived, and almost doubted if the pain was so much greater in great sorrows than in small troubles, or whether the nobleness only was greater, the pain not sharper, but more lingering.

Halfway toward the camp the king's people met her; and over the trampled ground, where they had fought so fiercely but a little time before, they spread breadth of golden cloth, that her feet might not touch the arms of her dead countrymen, or their brave bodies.

And so they came at last with many trumpet-blasts to the king's tent, who stood at the door of it, to welcome his bride that was to be: a noble man truly to look on, kindly, and genial-eyed; the red blood sprang up over his face when she came near; and she looked back no more, but bowed before him almost to the ground, and would have knelt, but that he caught her in his arms

and kissed her; she was pale no more now; and the king, as he gazed delightedly at her, did not notice that sorrow-mark, which was plain enough to her own people.

So the trumpets sounded again one long peal that seemed to make all the air reel and quiver, and the soldiers and lords shouted: "Hurrah for the Peace-Queen, Cissela!"

. . . . . .

"Come, Harald," said a beautiful golden-haired boy to one who was plainly his younger brother, "Come, and let us leave Robert here by the forge, and show our lady-mother this beautiful thing. Sweet master armourer, farewell."

"Are you going to the queen then?" said the armourer.

"Yea," said the boy, looking wonderingly at the strong craftsman's eager face.

"But nay; let me look at you awhile longer, you remind me so much of one I loved long ago in my own land. Stay awhile till your other brother goes with you."

"Well, I will stay, and think of what you have been telling me; I do not feel as if I should ever think of anything else for long together, as long as I live."

So he sat down again on an old battered anvil, and seemed with his bright eyes to be beholding something in the land of dreams. A gallant dream it was he dreamed, for he saw himself with his brothers and friends about him, seated on a throne, the justest king in all the earth, his people the lovingest of all people: he saw the ambassadors of the restored nations, that had been unjustly dealt with long ago; everywhere love, and peace if possible; justice and truth at all events.

Alas! he knew not that vengeance, so long delayed,

must fall at last in his life-time; he knew not that it takes longer to restore that whose growth has been through age and age, than the few years of a life-time; yet was the reality good, if not as good as the dream.

Presently his twin-brother Robert woke him from that dream, calling out: "Now, brother Svend, are we really ready; see here! but stop, kneel first; there, now am I the Bishop."

And he pulled his brother down on to his knees, and put on his head, where it fitted loosely enough now, hanging down from left to right, an iron crown fantastically wrought, which he himself, having just finished it, had taken out of the water, cool and dripping.

Robert and Harald laughed loud when they saw the crown hanging all askew, and the great drops rolling from it into Svend's eyes and down his cheeks, looking like tears: not so Svend; he rose, holding the crown level on his head, holding it back, so that it pressed against his brow hard, and, first dashing the drops to right and left, caught his brother by the hand, and said: "May I keep it, Robert? I shall wear it some day."

"Yea," said the other; "but it is a poor thing; better let Siur put it in the furnace again and make it into sword hilts."

Thereupon they began to go, Svend holding the crown in his hand: but as they were going, Siur called out: "Yet will I sell my dagger at a price, Prince Svend, even as you wished at first, rather than give it you for nothing."

"Well, for what?" said Svend, somewhat shortly, for he thought Siur was going back from his promise, which seemed ugly to him.

"Nay, be not angry, prince," said the armourer,

"only I pray you to satisfy this whim of mine; it is the first favour I have asked of you: will you ask the fair, noble lady, your mother, from Siur the smith, if she is happy now?"

"Willingly, sweet master Siur, if it pleases you; farewell."

And with happy young faces they went away; and when they were gone, Siur from a secret place drew out various weapons and armour, and began to work at them, having first drawn bolt and bar of his workshop carefully.

Svend, with Harald and Robert his two brethren, went their ways to the queen, and found her sitting alone in a fair court of the palace full of flowers, with a marble cloister round about it; and when she saw them coming, she rose up to meet them, her three fair sons.

Truly as that right royal woman bent over them lovingly there seemed little need of Siur's question.

So Svend showed her his dagger, but not the crown; and she asked many questions concerning Siur the smith, about his way of talking and his face, the colour of his hair even, till the boys wondered, she questioned them so closely, with beaming eyes and glowing cheeks, so that Svend thought he had never before seen his mother look so beautiful.

Then Svend said: "And, mother, don't be angry with Siur, will you? because he sent a message to you by me."

"Angry!" and straightway her soul was wandering where her body could not come, and for a moment or two she was living as before, with him close by her, in the old mountain land.

"Well, mother, he wanted me to ask you if you were happy now."

"Did he, Svend, this man with brown hair, grizzled as you say it is now? Is his hair soft then, this Siur, going down on to his shoulders in waves? and his eyes, do they glow steadily, as if lighted up from his heart? and how does he speak? Did you not tell me that his words led you, whether you would or no, into dreamland? Ah well! tell him I am happy, but not so happy as we shall be, as we were. And so you, son Robert, are getting to be quite a cunning smith; but do you think you will ever beat Siur?"

"Ah, mother, no," he said, "there is something with him that makes him seem quite infinitely beyond all other workmen I have ever heard of."

Some memory coming from that dreamland smote upon her heart more than the others; she blushed like a young girl, and said hesitatingly:

"Does he work with his left hand, son Robert; for I have heard that some men do so?" But in her heart she remembered how once, long ago in the old mountain country, in her father's house, some one had said that only men who were born so, could do cunningly with the left hand; and how Siur, then quite a boy, had said, "Well, I will try": and how, in a month or two, he had come to her with an armlet of silver, very curiously wrought, which he had done with his own left hand.

So Robert said: "Yea, mother, he works with his left hand almost as much as with his right, and sometimes I have seen him change the hammer suddenly from his right hand to his left, with a kind of half smile, as one who would say, 'Cannot I then?' and this more when he does smith's work in metal than when

he works in marble; and once I heard him say when he did so, 'I wonder where my first left hand work is; ah! I bide my time.' I wonder also, mother, what he meant by that."

She answered no word, but shook her arm free from its broad sleeve, and something glittered on it, near her wrist, something wrought out of silver set with quaint and uncouthly-cut stones of little value.

. . . . . .

In the council chamber, among the lords, sat Svend and his six brethren; he chief of all in the wielding of sword or axe, in the government of the people, in drawing the love of men and women to him; perfect in face and body, in wisdom and strength was Svend: next to him sat Robert, cunning in working of marble, or wood, or brass; all things could he make to look as if they lived, from the sweep of an angel's wings down to the slipping of a little field-mouse from under the sheaves in the harvest-time. Then there was Harald, who knew concerning all the stars of heaven and flowers of earth: Richard, who drew men's hearts from their bodies, with the words that swung to and fro in his glorious rhymes: William, to whom the air of heaven seemed a servant when the harp-strings quivered underneath his fingers: there were the two sailor-brothers, who the year before, young though they were, had come back from a long, perilous voyage, with news of an island they had found long and long away to the west, larger than any that this people knew of, but very fair and good, though uninhabited.

But now over all this noble brotherhood, with its various gifts hung one cloud of sorrow; their mother,

the Peace-Queen Cissela was dead, she who had taught them truth and nobleness so well; she was never to see the beginning of the end that they would work; truly it seemed sad.

There sat the seven brothers in the council chamber, waiting for the king, speaking no word, only thinking drearily; and under the pavement of the great church Cissela lay, and by the side of her tomb stood two men, old men both, Valdemar the king, and Siur.

So the king, after that he had gazed awhile on the carven face of her he had loved well, said at last:

"And now, Sir Carver, must you carve me also to lie there." And he pointed to the vacant space by the side of the fair alabaster figure.

"O king," said Siur, "except for a very few strokes on steel, I have done work now, having carved the queen there; I cannot do this thing for you."

What was it sent a sharp pang of bitterest suspicion through the very heart of the poor old man? he looked steadfastly at him for a moment or two, as if he would know all secrets; he could not, he had not the strength of life enough to get to the bottom of things; doubt vanished soon from his heart and his face under Siur's pitying gaze; he said, "Then perhaps I shall be my own statue," and therewithal he sat down on the edge of the low marble tomb, and laid his right arm across her breast; he fixed his eyes on the eastern belt of windows, and sat quite motionless and silent; and he never knew that she loved him not.

But Siur, when he had gazed at him for awhile, stole away quietly, as we do when we fear to awaken a sleeper; and the king never turned his head, but still sat there, never moving, scarce breathing, it seemed.

Siur stood in his own great hall (for his house was large), he stood before the daïs, and saw a fair sight, the work of his own hands.

For, fronting him, against the wall were seven thrones, and behind them a cloth of samite of purple wrought with golden stars, and barred across from right to left with long bars of silver and crimson, and edged below with melancholy, fading green, like a September sunset; and opposite each throne was a glittering suit of armour wrought wonderfully in bright steel, except that on the breast of each suit was a face worked marvellously in enamel, the face of Cissela in a glory of golden hair; and the glory of that gold spread away from the breast on all sides, and ran cunningly along with the steel rings, in such a way as it is hard even to imagine: moreover, on the crest of each helm was wrought the phœnix, the never-dying bird, the only creature that knows the sun; and by each suit lay a gleaming sword terrible to look at, steel from pommel to point, but wrought along the blade in burnished gold that outflashed the gleam of the steel, was written in fantastic letters the word "Westward."

So Siur gazed till he heard footsteps coming; then he turned to meet them. And Svend and his brethren sat silent in the council chamber, till they heard a great noise and clamour of the people arise through all the streets; then they rose to see what it might be. Meanwhile on the low marble tomb, under the dim sweeping vault sat, or rather lay, the king; for, though his right arm still lay over her breast, his head had fallen forward, and rested now on the shoulder of the marble queen. There he lay, with strange confusion of his scarlet, gold-wrought robes; silent, motionless, and dead. The seven

brethren stood together on a marble terrace of the royal palace, that was dotted about on the balusters of it with white statues: they were helmetted, and armed to the teeth, only over their armour great black cloaks were thrown.

Now the whole great terrace was a-sway with the crowd of nobles and princes, and others that were neither nobles nor princes, but true men only; and these were helmetted and wrapped in black cloaks even as the princes were, only the crests of the princes' helms were wrought wonderfully with that bird, the phœnix, all flaming with new power, dying because its old body is not strong enough for its new-found power: and those on that terrace who were unarmed had anxious faces, some fearful, some stormy with Devil's rage at disappointment; but among the faces of those helmed ones, though here and there you might see a pale face, there was no fear or rage, scarcely even any anxiety, but câlm, brave joy seemed to be on all.

Above the heads of all men on that terrace shone out Svend's brave face, the golden hair flowing from out of his helmet: a smile of quiet confidence overflowing from his mighty heart, in the depths of which it was dwelling, just showed a very little on his eyes and lips.

While all the vast square, and all the windows and roofs even of the houses over against the palace, were alive with an innumerable sea of troubled raging faces, showing white, upturned from the undersea of their many-coloured raiment; the murmur from them was like the sough of the first tempest-wind among the pines; and the gleam of spears here and there like the last few gleams of the sun through the woods when the black thunder-clouds come up over all, soon to be

shone through, those woods, by the gleam of the deep lightning.

Also sometimes the murmur would swell, and from the heart of it would come a fierce, hoarse, tearing, shattering roar, strangely discordant, of "War! War! give us war, O king!"

Then Svend stepping forward, his arms hidden under his long cloak as they hung down quietly, the smile on his face broadening somewhat, sent from his chest a mighty, effortless voice over all the raging:

"Hear, O ye people! War with all that is ugly and base; peace with all that is fair and good.—NO WAR with my brother's people."

Just then one of those unhelmetted, creeping round about stealthily to the place where Svend stood, lifted his arm and smote at him with a dagger; whereupon Svend clearing his right arm from his cloak with his left, lifted up his glittering right hand, and the traitor fell to the earth groaning with a broken jaw, for Svend had smitten him on the mouth a backward blow with his open hand.

One shouted from the crowd, "Ay, murderer Svend, slay our good nobles, as you poisoned the king your father, that you and your false brethren might oppress us with the memory of that Devil's witch, your mother!"

The smile left Svend's face and heart now, he looked very stern as he said:

"Hear, O ye people! In years past when I was a boy my dream of dreams was ever this, how I should make you good, and because good, happy, when I should become king over you; but as year by year passed I saw my dream flitting; the deep colours of it changed, faded, grew grey in the light of coming manhood; nevertheless,

God be my witness, that I have ever striven to make you just and true, hoping against hope continually; and I had even determined to bear everything and stay with you, even though you should remain unjust and liars, for the sake of the few who really love me: but now, seeing that God has made you mad, and that his vengeance will speedily fall, take heed how you cast out from you all that is good and true-hearted! Once more—which choose you, Peace or War?"

Between the good and the base, in the midst of the passionate faces and changing colours stood the great terrace, cold, and calm, and white, with its changeless statues; and for awhile there was silence.

Broken through at last by a yell, and the sharp whirr of arrows, and the cling, clang, from the armour of the terrace as Prince Harald staggered through unhurt, struck by the broad point on the helmet.

"What! War?" shouted Svend wrathfully, and his voice sounded like a clap of thunder following the lightning flash when a tower is struck. "What! war? swords for Svend! round about the king, good men and true! Sons of the golden-haired, show these men WAR."

As he spoke he let his black cloak fall, and up from their sheaths sprang seven swords, steel from pommel to point only; on the blades of them in fantastic letters of gold, shone the word WESTWARD.

Then all the terrace gleamed with steel, and amid the hurtling of stones and whizz of arrows they began to go westward.

. . . . . .

The streets ran with blood, the air was filled with groans and curses, the low waves nearest the granite

pier were edged with blood, because they first caught the drippings of the blood.

Then those of the people who durst stay on the pier saw the ships of Svend's little fleet leaving one by one; for he had taken aboard those ten ships whosoever had prayed to go, even at the last moment, wounded, or dying even; better so, for in their last moments came thoughts of good things to many of them, and it was good to be among the true.

But those haughty ones left behind, sullen and untamed, but with a horrible indefinable dread on them that was worse than death, or mere pain, howsoever fierce—these saw all the ships go out of the harbour merrily with swelling sail and dashing oar, and with joyous singing of those aboard; and Svend's was the last of all.

Whom they saw kneel down on the deck unhelmed, then all sheathed their swords that were about him; and the Prince Robert took from Svend's hand an iron crown fantastically wrought, and placed it on his head as he knelt; then he continued kneeling still, till, as the ship drew further and further away from the harbour, all things aboard of her became indistinct.

And they never saw Svend and his brethren again.

Here ends what William the Englishman wrote; but afterwards (in the night-time) he found the book of a certain chronicler which saith:

"In the spring-time, in May, the 550th year from the death of Svend the wonderful king, the good knights, sailing due eastward, came to a harbour of a land they knew not: wherein they saw many goodly ships, but of a strange fashion like the ships of the ancients, and

destitute of any mariners: besides they saw no beacons for the guidance of seamen, nor was there any sound of bells or singing, though the city was vast, with many goodly towers and palaces. So when they landed they found that which is hardly to be believed, but which is nevertheless true: for about the quays and about the streets lay many people dead, or stood, but quite without motion, and they were all white or about the colour of new-hewn freestone, yet were they not statues but real men, for they had, some of them, ghastly wounds which showed the structure of their flesh, and veins, and bones.

"Moreover the streets were red and wet with blood, and the harbour waves were red with it, because it dripped in great drops slowly from the quays.

"Then when the good knights saw this, they doubted not but that it was a fearful punishment on this people for sins of theirs; thereupon they entered into a church of that city and prayed God to pardon them; afterwards, going back to their ships, sailed away marvelling.

"And I John who wrote this history saw all this with mine own eyes."

PRINTED BY THE TEMPLE PRESS AT LETCHWORTH IN GREAT BRITAIN

Atlanta's race, and two other tales.